Submission of Material for Publication

Interested parties are welcome to submit primary source material and journal articles for publication in *Muscogiana*. Submissions should be e-mailed to calliebmcginnis@gmail.com as a Word document. To be considered for publication, material must be of cultural, historical or genealogical significance to the Columbus/original Muscogee County, Georgia, area. This includes the contemporary Georgia counties of Muscogee, Harris, Talbot, Marion, and Chattahoochee, as well as Russell County, Alabama. Vital information about living persons should not be included. All articles should be footnoted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, and should be 1000 to 5000 words in length. The Editors and the Editorial Board make final decisions on the acceptance of material for publication. Neither the Muscogee Genealogical Society nor Columbus State University can accept responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in material submitted for publication.

Book Reviews

Book reviews of both local titles and general genealogical monographs are accepted for inclusion in *Muscogiana*. Reviews should be 350-750 words, and should contain an overview of the work and an analysis on the value of the work to genealogists and other researchers in the region.

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On the cover: Martin Luther King, Jr. speaking in Columbus. Columbus State University Archives, Prince Hall Freemasonry Collection (MC 356)
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From the Editor

I hope readers of *Muscogiana* will be as pleased as I am with the mix of articles we have assembled for this edition of the journal. From information on some of the earliest settlers of Columbus to details about iconic moments in the local civil rights movement, we feature a diverse array of subjects and formats in this issue. This diversity has always been a special strength of the publication, in my opinion, and one of the reasons it is such a joy to help create.

We begin with an exceptional contribution by Aaron Guest, Sr., who provides context for an important moment in local history which has rarely received more than a passing mention: the visit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to Columbus in 1958. As Guest shows in his enlightening article, King’s visit may not have been the focal point of any focused campaign, but it reveals a quite a bit about the organization of Columbus’ black community at the time. Following this, we have a full transcription of the *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer* article covering the event.

Next we have two pieces focused on local civil rights leader Primus King, celebrated for bravely contesting the “whites-only” primary election tradition in Georgia and paving the way for the expansion of voting rights. First is a short essay containing Dr. Gary Sprayberry’s thoughts on the occasion of the dedication of the historic marker commemorating King’s actions. This is followed by an edited transcription of the only known interview with Primus King, conducted in 1979. As it provides some of the story behind what actually happened that fateful day in 1944 and what came afterward, it is an intriguing read for anyone with an interest in Columbus history.

Daniel Bellware provides us with another compelling article, this time telling the forgotten story of one of Columbus’ more infamous murders. As usual, Daniel has unearthed an important story that few of us are likely familiar with and tells it in his own style. Lastly, Callie McGinnis offers the first of what promises to be a series of contributions about the early residents of Columbus. In this first installment, she provides information on people buried in Linwood Cemetery which were born in the eighteenth century. It is sometimes easy to forget that many of the first arrivals in our town were born prior to American independence! David Owings’ update on Columbus State University Archives and our book reviews section round out the features in this edition.

I hope you enjoy this issue, and encourage you to contact me at any time if you have something you would like to have considered for publication in *Muscogiana*.

Mike Bunn, Editor

jamesmichaelbunn@gmail.com
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, Speech In Columbus, Georgia, and Its Effect On the Local Civil Rights Movement

by

Aaron Gerald Guest, Sr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. speaking in Columbus
Columbus State University Archives, Prince Hall Freemasonry Collection (MC 356)
The white man won’t hand out integration on a silver platter.¹

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Columbus, Georgia, 1958

The history of the civil rights has for long been told on the national scale or by following well-known figures and direct-action events such as the sit-in campaign and Rosa Parks’ famous stand on a Montgomery bus. More recently, historians have focused their research on the local level, revealing events that are not nationally prominent, but integral to the larger history of civil rights in the United States. Although national power determined the “deliberate speed” of desegregation legislation, local communities determined the actual speed in which they would be enforced. Some communities pressed for immediate social change through the integration of public facilities, such as swimming pools and restaurants, while others gained prominence through the desegregation of educational institutions. The work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is inseparable from the modern civil rights movement and for that purpose, this paper focuses on the events surrounding a speech he made in Columbus, Georgia, in 1958 and the way it affected the movement within the local community. King’s speech and appearance are examples of the local and national movements converging for a common purpose.

On the evening of July 1, 1958, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke to an audience of over one thousand people at the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge in the Liberty District of Columbus. He had been invited by D.P. Nesbitt, a member of Saint James AME Church and cousin to a senior deacon at King’s home church in Montgomery. Although King had yet to become the leading civil rights activist of his day, he was already well-known for his non-violent theme and message, and his leadership of the successful Montgomery bus boycott which helped propel him into national recognition. Following up on the momentum of the boycott, King founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with the purpose of enabling “the region’s Negro leaders to plan activities parallel to those of the NAACP.”² The first goal of the organization was to register two million new black voters before the 1960 presidential election. To accomplish this, King spent the summer of 1958 traveling to spread the message of equality and nonviolence throughout the nation.

One week before King’s speech in Columbus, his request to meet with President Dwight Eisenhower in order to address the President’s “recent plea for continued patience” and previous promises “to meet with Negro leaders” was accepted, and the conference enjoyed moderate media attention.³ On May 29, 1958, King, along with Lester Granger of the National Urban League, Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and A. Philip Randolph of the

¹ “King warns L.R. Decision Poses Violence”, Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, July 2, 1958, 6.
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters shared time with the President to discuss the rights of black Americans. The meeting proved unproductive and King immediately assessed it thus: “I think he believes it would be a fine thing to have an integrated society but I think he probably feels that the more you push it, the more tension it will create so you just wait 50 or 100 years and it will work itself out. I don’t think he feels like being a crusader for integration.” Although King was despondent about his encounter with the Eisenhower administration, he continued to call for committees to address the need for “vigorous enforcement of the Federal policy of non-discrimination in government employment.” Indeed, King focused on increasing communication between blacks and whites regarding court rulings on integration during the early summer of 1958.

The decision to host the emerging leader in Columbus caused a division in the community regarding the purpose and content of his message. Members of Saint James AME insisted that they did not desire, “a political meeting in the church” and voted nine to four to deny the church to the Prince Hall Masons for the purposes of King’s speech. Saint James AME expressed a “fear of retaliation by racists in the community” and acknowledged the “deaths of two community leaders and the threats of Klan-riders against others” as its rationale for refusing King’s presence. Although the board of Saint James was not prepared for the possible retaliation from white supremacists and the Ku Klux Klan, others in the black community viewed the opportunity differently. Reverend A. W. Fortson of neighboring Friendship Baptist Church offered his church to the Masons, stating that it would be a “special honor to open its doors...and pulpit to such a leader.”

In order to gain a proper understanding of why Saint James AME declined King the opportunity to speak at the church, the history of racial relationships in Columbus must be illuminated. The civil rights movement developed throughout Georgia and the Deep South based on the history and geography associated within various localities. Columbus was nestled in the fall line area of the Chattahoochee River, a position where readily-available waterpower at the upstream limit of navigation had transformed the city into an industrial hub in its early years and allowed it to become a vital part of the Confederate war effort from 1861 to 1865. The city’s bustling manufacturing concerns along its riverfront had become a special target of Union forces during the Civil War, and the focus of a cavalry raid which resulted in a pitched battle in 1865 and the destruction of most of its industrial complex. With such a visible reminder

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7 Ibid.
8 Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, July 2, 1958, 6.
of the Old South as a critical part of the city’s heritage and identity, Lost Cause ideology found a welcome atmosphere in the mill town that emerged from the ashes of the Civil War.

The Ku Klux Klan had deep roots in Columbus, as well. Its earliest documented politically-driven assassination was the murder of radical Reconstructionist George Ashburn in 1868. Its most recent occurred in 1956 with the murder of Dr. Thomas Brewer, a community leader who helped organize and finance King v. Chapman, the case which successfully ended the white-only primary voting system in Georgia. The Ku Klux Klan never accepted responsibility for the murder of Dr. Brewer; however, the Klan had a strong presence in Columbus throughout the 1950s, and the community had little doubt that the “invisible” terrorism associated with the Klan was responsible for Dr. Brewer’s murder.9

Regardless of Klan involvement or not, Brewer’s murder stunned the local community, and earned Columbus “a reputation in Georgia for a lack of [African-American] leadership.”10 Many of the city’s black professionals chose to leave the area rather than continue the fight against the entrenched forces of white supremacy. Indeed, Dr. Brewer’s murder helped fuel the uncertainty in Columbus’ black community regarding Dr. King’s presence and the future direction of the civil rights movement. Randolph Blackwell, a veteran activist and member of King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, observed that in Columbus “what the organization stood for died with Dr. Brewer” and alluded to accusations within the community of “selling the Negro vote to the highest bidder.”11 Immediate response to the lack of church support in Columbus came three days later in the pages of Memphis World, a black-owned semi-weekly newspaper which concluded that:

"The fact that the Baptists offered to gladly open their doors for the address of Rev. King is beside the point, when many of those among us at this late day and time make certain analysis and evaluations as to the position historic. Saint James selected for herself in times like these."12

Two years prior to the events that occurred on the night of King’s speech and four months after Dr. Brewer’s murder, the Ku Klux Klan held a rally in Columbus complete with a parade and cross burning ceremony. The event was highly publicized due to the permitting of the cross burning at Golden Park. An article in the Ledger-Enquirer suggested that members of the city government were endorsing the cross-burning by providing sanction for the Klan’s officially illegal activity.13 In the months leading up to the Klan’s rally, Dr. Brewer was laid to rest with thousands of mourners.14 E.E. Farley took control of Brewer’s

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11 Ibid., 144.
former leadership position in the NAACP; however, his death later in 1956 again left the community grieving the loss of another leader.

One year later, in the fall of 1957, the Klan staged another cross burning. This intimidation tactic occurred in the yard of a black family’s home on Third Avenue and Twentieth Street. The section of the city was moderately integrated, and the cross-burning evidently intended to discourage any more blacks from moving into the neighborhood. Cross-lighting ceremonies were common forms of terroristic intimidation and frequent across the Deep South during the 1950s. Although the constitution protects such action, the act of lighting a cross on public or private property outside of the Klan’s property was illegal. Nonetheless, in Columbus, the Fire Chief often permitted this activity, while city attorneys deemed the acts within the boundaries of the law.\(^\text{15}\)

Cross burnings were not the exclusive intimidation tactic used by white supremacists and the Ku Klux Klan in Columbus; bombings were also a \textit{modus operandi}. In January 1958, for example, dynamite shattered the structure of a “Negro dwelling.” Similar to the cross burnings and later bombings, they were a response to the increased number of blacks who were integrating formerly “whites only” neighborhoods.\(^\text{16}\) The directive was clear; there would be violence and retaliation against any forms of desegregation or advancement for African Americans in Columbus.

It was in this environment that the black community considered the arrival of King in Columbus. The message that ultimately split Saint James AME and the broader black community of Columbus on the issue proved to be an echo of the message that Dr. Brewer previously championed. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, growing popularity and sense of urgency regarding the advancement of the black community was familiar to many in Columbus; however, by the time of his speech, the climate regarding fighting for equality had changed. The unity harnessed by Dr. Brewer to defeat the white primary voting system stagnated with his death and created questions as to the effectiveness of direct action tactics within the city. The Klan, operating with complete anonymity, had effectively terrorized the black community in Columbus into a state of inactivity. Without support from local or state law enforcement, blacks were forced to live in a segregated society as second-class citizens and many had become reluctant to attempt to challenge the status quo for fear of reprisal.

On the evening of July 1, 1958, amidst numerous death threats, the Prince Hall Masons decided to host Dr. King in their building one block away from Saint James AME on the 800 block of 6th Avenue. A mason from Atlanta, not Columbus, introduced him in order to reduce the possibility of retaliation from the Ku Klux Klan or other local white supremacists. The \textit{Ledger-Enquirer} wrote a brief announcement with no mention of any church affiliation, only that King’s appearance was being sponsored by members of the “Masonic group.” With armed Masons on the roof of the temple, King gave his speech without incident. There is no known transcript of King’s speech; however, the \textit{Ledger-Enquirer} assigned a

\(^{15}\) \textit{Columbus Ledger-Enquirer}, 5 November, 1956, 6.

reporter and photographer, publishing quotes in the following day’s edition, which also ran the headline: “Blast Rocks Negro Home.” The bombing was not a direct attempt at King’s life, rather a message to the black population and leadership that blacks were not welcomed in their neighborhoods. Mrs. Essie Mae Ellison bought the house that was bombed from a white woman, Mrs. Gibson Brooks. As soon as Mrs. Brooks sold the house to Mrs. Ellison in May 1958, Mrs. Brooks began to get calls from a man identifying himself as Joe Musselwhite. Mr. Musselwhite said he was a real estate official who was going to punish Mrs. Brooks for selling her home to a black person. Mrs. Ellison later reported that “there had been threats to blow up the negro Masonic Temple” where Rev. King, Jr., spoke. However, she continued, “police were believed to be guarding the Masonic temple, so I guess they decided to use the dynamite on me.”

King’s speech at the Masonic Temple acknowledged the history of retaliation associated with standing for equality in Columbus. Along with his usual message of equality, King challenged the black population to “rid themselves of crippling fear” and to “maintain dignity and self-respect.” Acknowledging the tradition of violence and discrimination in the area, King stated, “those who’ve been kicked around, the last hired and the first fired, bombed, exploited—rid yourselves of hate if you have it...We won’t solve this problem by hating white folks or getting our guns.”

While King left Columbus and spent the following months promoting his first book, *Stride Towards Freedom*, the local community settled back into the status quo social structure. King’s presence had little effect on the direct action protests that occurred in Columbus in the following years. In 1959, after being named “southern enemy number one” by the Ku Klux Klan, journalist and anti-segregationist Ralph McGill was denied access to court and school facilities in Columbus. City commissioners justified their decision by stating that McGill’s message intended to, “ram ... opinion down the throats of people.”

With little support from the local government, the black community took no action against the established segregation in the city.

In the immediate years following King’s visit to Columbus, he again placed the SCLC’s focus on Georgia, joining the effort of the Albany (Georgia) Movement to desegregate that city in 1961. Although several communities surrounding Albany, including Americus and Moultrie, provided support for the movement, divisions inside the black community of Columbus persisted. In response to the inactivity of the local community and the broader movement in Georgia, Randolph Blackwell received complaints from

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community members that, "they treated the youth dirty ... they closed the churches to them."  

21 Even the local chapter of the NAACP failed to support the first six students arrested on the city buses in July 1961. The leadership of the black community was left to A.J. McClung, the head of the student liaison committee and eventual mayor pro tem. McClung and the local NAACP chapter attempted to prevent protests and "read-in" demonstrations against the Columbus Library for its denial of borrowing rights to blacks because they believed that "no additional demonstrations were needed."

Although King's visit to Columbus proved unable to provide a stimulus for the local community, it foreshadowed the divisions that persisted throughout the 1960s. The reluctance of community churches to engage political issues coupled with the lack of a college provided no platform for student organizations, which were the vanguard of activism in other Georgia communities where traditional leadership failed to act. Indeed, the Voter Education Project evaluated that in Columbus "existing leadership...is not equipped at this time to conduct the type of intensive drive that should be carried on."  

Unable to ignite any direct action protests or attract significant press coverage, King's visit to Columbus became an afterthought to the local community. Despite the progress made by King throughout Georgia and the nation at large, the local community continued to struggle against the intertwined systems of white supremacy and community politics. Although King considered the Albany Movement a failure, many in the community continued their plans and were able to make gains against the local power structures. Unlike the events in Columbus, which created more division than unity surrounding the strategies dealing with desegregation, Albany was able to use King's appearance as a springboard for future activity.

But in Columbus, division and confusion marred the activity that followed King's appearance. Within five years, exasperation furthered divisions in the community, and in July 1963, three separate groups of black community leaders expressed their continued opposition to student-led direct action protests. The city council also determined to close two swimming pools rather than to allow their integration. In the wake of this turmoil, a biracial advisory committee was finally created to examine racial problems in the community. Fourteen of the board's twenty members were white, however, and little progress emerged from the disproportionately-composed committee.  

In Columbus, the white supremacist structure coupled with black acquiescence rendered the desegregation of the public library and movie theaters as the only tangible progress made throughout the 1960s. Similar to the situation in most of the Deep South, desegregation in Columbus finally occurred during federal enforcement of Brown v. Board of Education in the 1970s. Since that time, the city has

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
also followed the trend of gradual “resegregation” following federal and state reversals of integration legislation. Although King is now viewed as a national hero across socioeconomic demographics and has been honored with a national holiday, his speech and efforts in Columbus have largely gone overlooked. In 2007, on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer published a memorial article titled “The Forgotten Speech” in which the author addresses the lack of public knowledge about King, Jr.’s, local appearance and several popular reasons for why he supposedly bypassed the city.24

Amongst the reasons that made “no sense,” lies the complicated, sometimes paradoxical, core of the lasting effects of King’s “forgotten speech” in Columbus: “local black preachers didn’t want him in their pulpits, he was too controversial”; and “we took care of our own problems.”25 The reality of violence from white supremacists was obvious and ignited divisions in the community over willingness to provoke the power structure by participating in any direct actions towards integration. The murder of respected leader Dr. Thomas Brewer was still fresh in the collective memory of the community, creating the reluctance of future leaders to participate campaigns that would raise the attention of local segregationists. The focus for these leaders became the protection of their communities, not to bring additional violence upon themselves by stridently demanding equality.

The bombing that accompanied King’s appearance in Columbus was the second act of racial terrorism committed against the black community in 1958. Tensions were already high from constant intimidation tactics and cross burnings that were employed by white supremacists. Without strong leadership, the black community proved reluctant to support further protests that would undoubtedly be accompanied by some form of violence. Dr. King, aware of the racially charged climate, challenged the black population of Columbus to rid itself of the entrenched hatred and fear that festered in response to the incessant violence and discriminations from white supremacists. King’s speech here, however, ultimately did more to reveal the divisions within the community than determine a specific direct action goal.

25 Ibid.
The Rev. Martin Luther King, leader of the Negro boycott of bases in Montgomery, warned here last night that “violent forces of the South” will be encouraged unless the court decision to delay integration in Little Rock is reversed.

He said that these forces will, in effect, be told that if they “just make a little trouble” integration of the races can be delayed.

The 29-year old Negro Baptist minister, who last week sat in on a conference with President Eisenhower to discuss racial problems in the South, spoke before a crowd of more than 1,000 Negro men and women at Masonic Temple Auditorium, 815 Sixth Ave.

The meeting was sponsored by Prince Hall Masonic Fellowship of Columbus.
Maintain Dignity

He urged Columbus’ Negroes to “maintain a continuing sense of dignity and self-respect” in order to achieve integration.

“The white man won’t hand out integration on a silver platter,” he said. He said Negroes must “seek to gain the respect of others by improving personal standards where they lag behind…This will break down all the arguments of the segregationists.”

He advised that Negroes “must rid themselves of crippling fear.”

“The Negro who is an Uncle Tom is not only a danger to the Negro race but he is a danger to America.”

Amid thunderous applause, the Negro leader admonished his people to cast aside fear of suffering.

“There can be no birth and no growth without…pain. It may mean losing a job, but don’t let that frighten you.”

“Rid Yourself of Hate”

Finally, King said that Negroes “must use the proper methods to gain integration...Those who’ve been kicked around, the last hired and first fired, bombed, exploited—rid yourselves of hate if you have it...We won’t solve this problem by hating white folks or getting our guns.”

He said “we must tell this to the white South: ‘We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will match your ability to mete out suffering with our ability to endure it...We will wear you down with our capacity for love and suffering.”

King said he believes that “there are many more white people of good will in the South than you can see on the surface.”

He said these people do not speak out in the integration-segregation battle because of fear of political, economic and social reprisal.
He said that someday the channels of communication between the white man and black man will open “so we can sit down together and solve our mutual problem.”

King was introduced by John Wesley Dobbs of Atlanta, Grand Master of Prince Hall Masons of Georgia.

Dobbs said that the black man “has a long and distinguished history in the world.” He traced the achievements of “dark people” from the dawn of history to the time Negroes were enslaved in the United States.
Primus King and the Postwar Struggle for Voting Rights in Georgia: Remarks at the Dedication of the Primus King Historical Marker

By

Dr. Gary S. Sprayberry
Columbus State University

The historic marker commemorating Primus King’s role in the Civil Rights Movement in Georgia stands near the Government Center in downtown Columbus. Photo courtesy of Gary Sprayberry.
Whenever we remember the civil rights movement, certain iconic, indelible images always come to mind: Rosa Parks’ courageous stand on a Montgomery bus in 1955; the March on Washington in August of 1963; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., leading thousands of marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge during the Selma-to-Montgomery in March 1965. These are the defining moments of the Civil Rights Movement. In fact, these are some of the most important moments in our nation’s history. But, as we all know, there is much more to the story. While Parks and King are certainly central to the civil rights narrative, and while they deserve to be lionized for their sacrifices and tireless efforts, there are thousands, even millions of others, who made deep contributions to the twentieth century struggle for civil rights. And they did so in virtual anonymity. Their stories deserve to be told as well.¹

Without these “foot soldiers,” the civil rights movement would have never succeeded. Without ordinary people doing extraordinary things, the iron walls of segregation would have never been breached. Their willingness to join a march for social justice, to sign an NAACP petition, to write a letter of protest to the local newspaper, to sit in at a lunch counter, or to brave dogs and fire hoses in Birmingham helped turn a regional movement into a national crusade.

Today, we honor one of those foot soldiers – Primus King – whose solitary brave act in July of 1944 helped to restore the vote for thousands of African Americans across Georgia, commencing a long march to freedom that would culminate with the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

Primus King was born in 1900 in Russell County, Alabama. His parents, Ed and Lucy King, were sharecroppers. They relocated to Columbus, Georgia, when Primus was eleven years old. He and his father went to work at the Meritas Mill. Although he never received a formal education, King would eventually open his own business and secure financial independence for his family.²

“I bought a barber shop for $8.00 and didn’t [even] know how to cut hair,” King told an interviewer in 1979. “I went down on 1st Avenue to Sherald Barber Shop and watched the barbers cut hair. I got the idea and went back and put it into practice and learned how to be a real ideal barber and the highest amount [of] money I ever [made] in a barber shop was $76.00 a day.”³

King took up his new profession because he had grown “tired of working for other folks and wanted to be [his] own boss.” He had served as a butler and chauffeur for a wealthy white family, but he encountered a great deal of humiliation and discrimination on the job and in town.⁴

A few years later, he became a pastor, manning the pulpit at a number of area churches, including Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church and Salem Baptist Church. King probably would have been content to go on

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¹ Sprayberry gave this address at the dedication of the Primus King historical marker in downtown Columbus, Georgia, on April 10, 2015. The original text has undergone modest revisions and footnotes have been added.
³ Primus King, interview by Paul A. Davis, July 16, 1979, typed transcript in the Columbus State University Archives, Columbus, Georgia (hereafter referred to as “Primus King interview”).
⁴ Primus King interview.
barbering and ministering to his congregation if not for the momentous changes sweeping through the South and the rest of the nation during the 1940s.\(^5\)

The Second World War had a profound impact on southern race relations. In fact, many historians see the war as a catalyst for the modern civil rights movement, spurring countless efforts to end Jim Crow restrictions and restore the vote. In 1942, the black-owned *Pittsburgh Courier* launched the Double V Campaign, encouraging African Americans to fight against the forces of tyranny at home and abroad. Earlier, in 1941, the federal government created the Fair Employment Practices Commission to investigate job discrimination within wartime industries. NAACP membership increased tenfold during the war, bringing in 450,000 new members. There were voting rights drives launched in each southern state – many of them led by returning veterans. Challenges to white supremacy were emerging from every fold.

For many, restoring the vote was the key to eliminating legalized segregation across the South. Since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the African American vote had been all but silenced in the South due to literacy tests, poll taxes, property qualifications, and “good character” clauses.

One of the most effective means of disfranchising African Americans was the all-white primary election. By the 1940s, the conservative Democratic Party had a virtual lock on the South, transforming it into a one-party region. Due to the restrictive measures I mentioned above, the Republican Party – the party of Lincoln – had lost hundreds of thousands of African American supporters. Republican candidates for statewide races could only expect to get twenty or thirty percent of the vote in the November elections, if they were lucky. Therefore, the primary election was all-important, as it determined the eventual winner in November. Georgia, like other southern states, had an all-white primary election. And its black residents were not allowed to vote in the Democratic primary, which meant they had no impact on the general election.

In 1944, the United States Supreme Court ruled in a Texas case, *Smith v. Allwright*, that “the right to vote in a primary for the nomination of candidates...like the vote in a general election, is a right secured by the Constitution.”\(^6\) Following this decision, NAACP leaders decided to launch a similar challenge against Georgia’s all-white primary. Rather than wait for state leaders to take action, a local physician and NAACP leader, Dr. Thomas Brewer, decided to launch his own voting rights crusade. But, fearing retribution, no one seemed eager to step forward and test the all-white primary.

“This test case come up, testing Democratic Primary Party negroes voting,” King said. “Several talked about it, you see. Dr. Brewer and all the rest of these higher up men. They talked about it. But in other words, nobody put a bell around the cat’s neck. The rats talked about it, but they wouldn’t put the bell on the cat’s neck. I told ‘em, I said, ‘I will.’”\(^7\)

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\(^5\) Lloyd, “Primus King.”
\(^7\) Primus King interview.
On July 4, 1944, King, a registered voter, went to the Muscogee County Courthouse and attempted to vote. After entering the courthouse, a detective grabbed him and asked why he was there. “I’m going to vote, sir,” King replied. The detective barked a racial epithet and roughly escorted him to the door and out into the street.8

Shaken but determined to carry out Brewer’s plan, King walked three blocks to a white attorney’s office and told him that he wanted to sue the Democratic Party. The lawyer, Oscar Smith, tried to talk him out of it. “Primus, do you really want to sue the Democratic Party?” he asked. “Do you know what you’re doing?” King said that he did.

The attorney filed a lawsuit against the Muscogee County Democratic Party Executive Committee (chaired by Joseph Chapman) for denying King the right to vote. Thomas Brewer and other black residents raised $10,000 to pay the attorney fees. Almost immediately, King began receiving menacing phone calls. One man even threatened to toss him in the river. “Well, they’ve put so many Negroes in the river for nothing,” King said. “I’m willing to go in there for something.”9

Arguments in the case, King v. Chapman, began in a federal district court in September of 1945. His attorneys argued that King’s right to vote under the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Seventeenth Amendments had been violated. They sued for $5,000 in damages. In October 1945, federal judge T. Hoyt Davis ruled in King’s favor, awarding him $100.10

The defense team appealed the decision, arguing that the Democratic Party Executive Committee operated as a private entity and could hold elections as its members saw fit. The United States Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans disagreed. In March 1946, Judge Samuel Sibley ruled that the primary was “an action by the state” and that denying King the vote had violated his constitutional rights. The Muscogee County Democratic Party appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, but the Justices refused to hear the case. King had won.11

The Columbus Ledger-Enquirer lauded the court’s decision: “Since we have felt for some time that qualified Georgia Negroes have every moral right to participate in Democratic primaries, we are neither surprised nor alarmed at the unanimous opinion of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in the case of Primus King...The truth is that the law of this thing is settled. Like it or not the day is past when Negroes may be excluded legally from the exercise of the franchise in Georgia primaries, and – why not?”12

A barrier had been removed, but of course many others remained. It would take another twenty years and dozens of martyred lives before all of the restrictions to voting were lifted by the Voting Rights

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8 Primus King interview; Atlanta Constitution, July 5, 1944.
9 Primus King interview.
10 Ibid.
11 Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, October 12, 1945; Lloyd, “Primus King.” The Muscogee County Democratic Executive Committee didn’t get around to paying King until 1977. With accumulated interest, the settlement totaled $324.70. See the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, June 18, 1977.
12 Columbus Ledger, March 7, 1946; Lloyd, “Primus King.”
13 Sunday Ledger-Enquirer, March 10, 1946.
Act of 1965. But this fact should not and cannot diminish what King had accomplished. He had won a significant victory for the cause of civil rights, opening the door for thousands of African Americans to vote in Georgia’s Democratic primary election. Without his efforts, and the efforts of thousands of other “foot soldiers” of the movement, the black freedom struggle would not have succeeded.
Primus King in 1977, holding his check from the Democratic Party for damages sustained in being denied the right to vote in 1944. The original award was $100, and finally paid with interest added years later. Courtesy of the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer
This interview with local civil rights activist Primus King was conducted in 1979 by journalist Paul A. Davis. It has been edited for brevity and to focus on King’s biography and involvement in efforts to eliminate racial barriers to voting in Georgia. The entire transcript is available at Columbus State University Archives.

PAD = Paul Allen Davis
PK = Primus King

PAD: Where did you live?

PK: I lived at 408 19th Street.

PAD: Who was your father?

PK: Ed King. My mother was named Lucy King.

PAD: Did you go to school?

PK: No, I came here and didn’t go to school I went to work at Meritas mill. Water boy when they were building that mill.

PAD: Where was that located at? What’s there now?

PK: ’Round about 45th street.

PAD: You say it was new at that time? They had just built it?

PK: No, they was building it.

PAD: You carried water back from the stream?

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1 Interview with Primus King, General Oral History Collection, Columbus State University Archives, Columbus, Georgia. Davis, an award-winning journalist, worked with several news organizations in Alabama and Mississippi during his long career and has been recognized as a leader in his coverage of civil rights issues in the 1960s and 1970s.
PK: Yes, I was the water boy... My father worked there, too. We didn’t get much.

PAD: How old did you say you were?

PK: I’m seventy-nine. I was about twelve years old at the time.

PAD: That was about 1911 or 1912.

PK: That’s right, yes, I was born in 1900, 1912 that easy to figure out.

PAD: What type of mill was Meritas?

PK: A cotton mill.

PAD: You worked there how long?

PK: Oh, I worked there a couple of years. Then after that, I worked butler work for Mrs. Molly Woodall.

PAD: What type of people were they?

PK: Oh, they was very nice people...I got a pretty good bit of money there—eight dollars.

PAD: Eight dollars a week?

PK: Yes, eight dollars a week. That was big money in those days.

PAD: What were some of your duties there?

PK: Oh, I had to cook breakfast for ‘em. I learned to cook egg omelets and bacon and eggs, fix the cereal and wait tables, when they had company. Then after that she bought a automobile and learned me how to drive it and I got to be the chauffeur—and the butler—and that was a little more then—about nine dollars a week.

PAD: I saw that in the (city) directory, too. Did you all move, not off 19th Street, but did you move to another house on 19th Street?
PK: Yes, sure did, to 416 19th Street.

PAD: And when did you move there? In between the time you were working for the Woodalls then?

PK: Yes, I was working for the Woodalls then.

PAD: Any reason for moving to another house? Why did you all move?

PK: Well, we moved because it was a larger house, more conveniences, rather than being richer.

PAD: Was your father still working at Meritas?

PK: Yeah, he was still working there. They finished that thing [the building] and started running cloth and my father was working up there in the picker room.

PAD: What type of woman was your mother?

PK: Oh, she was a very fine woman; she did the laundry, such as washin’ the white folks’ clothes. After that, I quit Mrs. Molly Woodall and started working for a rich man, Dan Joseph.

PAD: Dan Joseph?

PK: Yes...

PAD: What did you do for him?

PK: I chauffeured, just a regular chauffer. Didn’t do much housework there. Did chauffeuring work there and they paid me then sixteen dollars a week for chauffeuring this man. Furnished my clothes...

PAD: When did you marry?

PK: Oh, 19...(yells to his wife) Jeanie! When did we marry, 1921? [She replied “1921”]

PAD: Where did you work when you...
PK: Dan Joseph. After that I got tired working for other folks and wanted to be my own boss. I bought a barber shop for eight dollars and didn't know how to cut hair. The first Saturday, I went in my barber shop. I run eight dollars that week for cuttin’ hair. Haircut and shave was thirty-five cents. (Laughs) Haircut and shave was thirty-five cents.

PAD: You were a barber. You cut on and off for a long time.

PK: I barbered thirty years and after that I run my own boss...the next two weeks, I run eleven that week.

PAD: How did you learn to cut hair?

PK: I went down on 1st Avenue to Sherald Barber Shop and watched the barbers cut hair. I got the idea and went back and put it into practice and learned how to be a real ideal barber and the highest amount a’ money I ever run in a barber shop was seventy-six dollars a day.

PAD: Who did you buy your barber shop from?

PK: The eight dollar barber shop was bought from a fellow named Claude Austin.

PAD: What was there before the barber shop?

PK: Well, a store, he was running a store in a barber shop and he sold me the barber shop and he went into the store. I bought the barber shop for eight dollars and went to work and made money. That barber shop made me buy clothes and a Studebaker. I bought that car for $150 secondhand...

PAD: When did you become a pastor?

PK: 1922.

PAD: What was the first church you pastored?

PK: The first church I pastored, acting pastor, was Shady Grove Baptist Church on 2nd Avenue. An acting pastor...then I was called to my first church...was the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church.

PAD: Were you the first pastor there at Mt. Pleasant?
PK: No, they had a lot of pastors. I’m the first pastor that build the church. Now stands on Silkview Dr., and I pastored that church about fourteen or fifteen years...

PAD: When you married, where did you live when you married her?

PK: I lived on 18th Street, no, 19th Street on 7th Avenue, was then Pine Street. Then we come from Pine Street back to 7th Avenue.

PAD: 17th and 7th?

PK: [Laugh] You [word missing] that. Then I left there and went to Mill Hill. They call that place now over here Sheppard Drive that was Mill Hill. I stayed over there a long time and left there and went to the project.

PAD: 5th Avenue?

PK: Yeah, 5th Avenue project.

PAD: I’m interested to know when you went into business for yourself. Were you afraid because you knew you were leaving a pretty good thing?

PK: I didn’t like what the man told me, see. It was a colored lady come to the door selling some vegetables and I told his wife that it’s a colored lady, want to know did he want to buy some vegetables. He come out to the garage and cursed me out. Told me don’t I ever send a “colored lady” around on his presence of his wife. I told him my mother always taught me, Mrs. Joe (word missing) to have respect for ladies. See, so I just got hot and just carried him to the office, come back, put the Cadillac up...went on across the courthouse square and went on home. I bought this barber shop and figured I could make it myself.

I’m a man that loved my people, black folks, and couldn’t say that about them white people. I don’t care how much money I makes or intend to make, I like goin’ home. Well, after that, then this test case come up. I would run my barber shop on 17th Street, then I went across a street to a place called Jimbo’s there...café over there, I walked in front and the café man said “we don’t serve any niggers—spelled it out—here.” You have to go around to the window.” Well, I didn’t get all excited because he told me I had to go to the window and wasn’t no other place else up there. In those days, it was hard for a black man
to get licensed to open up a café, we had to get food while we could. I went on around to the window and he handed me a scrambled dog and I come on back to the shop. I say now I wondered why that man didn’t want me to come in there to get some food. This worried me.

This test case come up, testing Democratic Primary Party negroes voting. Several talked about it, you see. Dr. Brewer and all the rest of these higher up men. They talked about it. But in other words, nobody put a bell around the cat’s neck. The rats talked about it, but they wouldn’t put the bell on the cat’s neck. I told ‘em, I said “I will.” We went down, I said we, they carried me down to the courthouse and they stood on 10th Street and 2nd Avenue, the car headed 10th and run over a one-way street. The men got out and I walked on down. I went in there and voted. When I went in, the detective grabbed me, asked “what in the hell are you doin’ nigger?” I say "I’m going to vote, sir.” Detectives: “ain’t no niggers votin’ here today.” The detectives grabbed me, they [friends who brought him downtown] jumped in their car and flew and left me with the bag holding it.

PAD: Who did you say some of these men were?

PK: Well, I won’t call names, just forget that and what happened when I looked out they were gone. I looked and saw ‘em jump in the car and they fled away from there. Two car loads of ‘em. A car load here and a car load on 2nd Avenue. All of ‘em were left. Those detectives would kill you, mean. I used a level head, and I said to the man...I admired his suit. A nice looking gray suit you go on...kinda got him down a little bit. I said: “What’s your name, Sir?” He said: “Officer Davis.” I said, ”I’ll see ya later, sir.” I walked away and went up to the lawyer. It was three blocks walking, he coulda’ killed me in the street. Three blocks to the lawyer’s office.

PAD: 1940?

PK: 1944...July 4, 1944. I walked on up there to the lawyer’s office and the lawyer said to me: “Primus, do you really want to sue the Democratic Primary Party? Do you know what you’re doing?” I told him, yes sir, I know.

PAD: What lawyer was this?

PK: The lawyer was Odis [Oscar] Smith, Sr. When I got there and he said: “All right, you can sue for $5,000 denying you the rights and privilege to vote because of your race, color and creed...” We sued and it came out in the afternoon paper that afternoon. Primus King had sued the Democratic Party denying him rights and privileges to vote, because of race and color. Sued for $5,000. An old
cracker called me and said: "Are you the nigger that caused so much trouble about this voting around here in the white primary?" I say: "I’m not the nigger, sir, but I’m Primus King.” He said: “You must want to be put in the river.” I said: “Well, they’ve put so many negroes in the river for nothing, I’m willin’ to go in there for something!” He hung the phone (laughs). So then the thing was on the way then, we had the trial in Macon, Judge Hart Davis in Macon.

PAD: Why did they have it in Macon?

PK: They had it away from here, went to Macon. Had to go there every day in the car.

PAD: Did you receive many threats at the federal building in Macon?

PK: We had the trial. The negroes in Macon were afraid to come out to the trial. Nobody there but a few of us and the lawyers... Our main lawyer was Stroeger in Macon. After that case in Macon, judge in Macon, Georgia, Hart Davis ruled. My favorite, he was from down here around Moultrie, Georgia. A fellow from Moultrie. He says he ruled my case, appealed it and carried it to the Court of Appeals in New Orleans. When I went down to New Orleans, the New Orleans black folks were scared. Nothing they never knew. A black man sittin’ over there with all those red and white faces. Just a few men were left here and went down there on the case. Stroeger was there...he argued: "Primus King was a citizen and he was a taxpayer of the country...the country belongs to the U.S.” Aw, we had a good one.

Well, they called on me to stand, I stood up and the judge in the center, he looked like he was chairman, ... The man in the middle said: “Primus, do you want the right and privilege to vote?” Do you want $5,000?” I could of scratched my head and said: "Captain, give me the $5,000” but the Lord had fixed me with pride. I stood there with tears running down my cheeks. I said: “Your Honor, I want the right and the privilege to vote for my people.” If I had said I want the right and the privilege that would have been me, just me, but my people being involved. The judge scribbled something on a piece of plain paper and handed it to the one on his right, and he scribbled something on it, then handed it to one with something on it. The jury hung his head and said: “Primus, in thirty days, we’ll read the decision.” In thirty days, it come out that Primus King had won the case. This negro had won in the South.

One little cracker called me, says” “The Ku Klux gonna’ get you.” I knew he was one of those money sharks called McGee. I say “well, if the Ku Klux come, I’m gonna...I had a popper called a .38 Smith Wesson cartridges. See here, I’m gonna get the first biggest one come” and he was a large guy (laughs). “Primus, you’re a sight, you’re a sight!”
It was quite awful in those days...back in those days. They had a drug store on Broad Street called Wheat's Drug Store. If you walk in that drug store with your hat on, the man would knock it off your head. Push off your hat on the floor. They had them little fountains that way you could get Coke and ice cream. You had to go back around there and stand away from the fountain. You couldn't eat it in there. You had to go out. I'm comin' from experience. I've had my hat knocked off. So, we've come a long way...we got a long ways to go. As a young man, I'm appealing to you tell all the young folks eighteen and up to register and vote 'cause without the ballot, you become a slave to the man with it. Know what you want and vote for it. That's the weapon that you got, it was given to you. Lot a men lost their lives. M.L. King lost his life. M.L. did exactly what you're doin', I'm the cause of M.L. bein' inspired to do what he did but he did just what you doin' now, and it had to be a report...

PK: I didn't go to college, didn't finish high school, but I've got a lot of good training. I got a (word missing). I've taken advantage of lots of things. I've studied theology and I've studied some mighty good books, it made me a self-prepared man. You may not find what you're lookin' for. I've had to struggle in life. I went to school in Alabama. There was the little church, Mt. Sinai. One teacher with a gang of children. It was a man...Professor Powell, we had a five month school. We went to school three months. We had to get out of school...to beat down cotton stalks...in the field...rake out the ditches...get the land prepared for Daddy to plow it up and plow it under. After that it was time for me to take a bucket and drop corn...didn't have the chance that you have now. The one good thing, the Lord was with me...

...Now, what is the principal thing you want out of me? You got all I got now. It took 'em thirty years, seven percent interest on the $100 they owed me and thirty years later that seven percent had run up to three hundred and some odd dollars. They paid it all. The Democratic primary come and give me a check and they had all the photographers on 2nd Avenue and 10th Street, had me walking with the check and snapping my picture. It's all in the paper.

PAD: You said the test case came up, how were you involved with the meeting that they had? When you decided to do it. Had you attended their meeting?

PK: I always visit, it is known as the Citizen Committee and I’m good at that meeting. It has (word missing) Rev. Bryan (word missing) talked to Brewer, he was afraid to do any(thing), adding he had too much to lose.

The old preacher didn't have nothing to lose, well, why not ask him, see if we can't get him to do it. That's something’ I want you to write down. That some of these damn preachers lie. I thought about
what happened to me over at Jimbo’s. I said this is a good chance for me to pay him back. I went on and told him. I’ll do it. I’ll challenge him. I’m not afraid to challenge the devil.

PAD: Whose idea was it to challenge him? To go down there?

PK: The committee wanted somebody to challenge after we challenged, raised money to fight the case, The Citizen Committee raised money headed by Dr. Thomas Brewer to raise the money and they raised more than $10,000 to fight the case, paid off all lawyers and the transportation.

PAD: How did they raise the money?

PK: From churches, different cities, money from Albany, money from Alabama, and individuals in the city. I even gave some money myself. I wish I had some of it now (laughs)...
Uncle Bob and the Trial of the Century

By Daniel A. Bellware

"Uncle Bob" Howard with his grandchildren, from his 1912 autobiography Reminiscences.

1 Robert Howard, *Reminiscences* (Columbus, GA: Gilbert Printing Co., 1912). Robert Howard’s autobiography recounts many interesting stories of the Civil War and his life in Columbus but fails to mention his part in one of the longest and most important trials in the city’s history.
Robert Milton Howard, a member of one of the most prominent families in Columbus and a well-known community activist and political gadfly in the late 1800s and early 1900s, perpetrated what is probably the most widely witnessed murder in the city’s history. At the 1890 Chattahoochee Valley Exposition, he brutally killed a man in front of thousands of people. The trial following the incident was one of the longest and most important in Columbus history. Despite his involvement in the affair, “Uncle Bob” remained a popular and respected community leader for the remainder of his life.

The victim of the crime was his brother-in-law, Thomas Colbert (T. C.) Dawson. Bob had the help of his half-brother Richard Howard and another brother-in-law James Bickerstaff in perpetrating the deed. The sensational incident received coverage in newspapers across the country; from New York to California and Illinois to Texas.² It captivated the people of Columbus for over a year as the case wended its way through the legal process. Amazingly, after several court appearances, the defendants walked out of the courtroom in late 1891 scot free.

The crime took place immediately following a “gentleman’s roadster” horse race during the Grand Chattahoochee Valley Exposition. The Exposition was a multiday event that took place in a large facility in the South Commons area designed specifically for such activities. It was similar to a state fair with machinery exhibits, fireworks displays, livestock shows, races and amusements of all kinds that drew people from around Georgia and neighboring states. The harness race was held at the Exposition grounds on November 11, 1890. The victim, T. C. Dawson, entered and raced his horse “Fairhaven” to second place. Upon finishing the race, he trotted over to the judges’ stand, dismounted from his sulky, passed under the rail, and walked into his own slaughter.

²“A Georgia Tragedy,” Democrat and Chronicle, Rochester, NY, November 12, 1890; “A Running Fight,” San Francisco Chronicle, November 12, 1890, 1; “Murdered At The Races,” Daily Interocian, Chicago, IL, November 12, 1890, 3; “A Family Quarrel,” Fort Worth Gazette, November 13, 1890, 8.
Portion of an ad for the Exposition from the *Columbus Enquirer*, August 31, 1890

T. C. Dawson’s horse “Fairhaven” would have been hitched to a sulky like this 1890 version
From standardbredcanada.ca
Moments before, chief of police Jesse Beard received a warning when a gentleman approached him to say he feared that “something ... was about to occur.” The chief attempted to intercede but was too late. As Dawson passed under the rail and proceeded into the crowd, Bob Howard sank an eight-inch knife deep into his shoulder. The stabbing broke Dawson’s collar bone and severed an artery. It proved mortal. According to county physician, Dr. Robert E. Griggs, the victim would have no more than two or three minutes to live. As his life slipped away, Dawson struggled to draw a pistol from his pocket to defend himself while retreating from his assassins. Bob followed up his knifing with several shots from a pistol. While the stabbing went mostly unnoticed, the pistol shots alerted the crowd.

Richard Howard wasted no time getting off a few shots of his own before Bickerstaff joined in. Alerted by the gunplay, Mayor Daniel P. Dozier saw the three men stalking their wounded victim and moved to intervene. He reached Bickerstaff first and made a move to stop him. As Bickerstaff raised his gun to fire, Dozier put his hand up and "commanded him, as mayor of the city, not to shoot." Bickerstaff nevertheless fired the shot under the mayor’s arm. A puff of smoke rose in the mayor’s face causing bystanders to think the mayor himself had been hit. Dawson slowly staggered in a circle, sank to the ground and expired. His widowed sister, Mrs. Sue Griffith, dressed in black, hurried onto the track demanding “Show me the man who did this.” Bob Howard quickly responded “By God, I am the man who shot him and you caused it all.” With that, she grabbed her brother’s gun. Both were hastily disarmed by police, avoiding further bloodshed.

The brothers-in-law were confident that the killing was warranted. A woman had been shamed and the family’s name was at stake. They were convinced that their neighbors would see things their way. Friends of the men released a statement after the arrest saying that “The gentlemen charged with the shooting desire that public opinion be suspended until the evidence comes out on the trial, as it involves a serious and private family matter, which justifies them.”

Details emerged as the story played out in the courts and in the papers. The Dawson and Howard families had been allied by the marriage of T. C. Dawson’s sister, Anna, to Bob Howard’s brother, Tyler in 1863. T.C. Dawson was the son of William C. Dawson and also the estranged husband of Antoinette Rutherford (Ruth) Howard, another Howard sibling and the sister-in-law of Bickerstaff. Dawson had been born in Glenville, Alabama in 1847, about thirty miles south of Columbus. Richard Howard was the son of Augustus Howard and his second wife, Ann Lindsay making him a half-brother of Bob. He was born in 1855. James Bickerstaff, the husband of Richard’s sister, Emily Howard, was born in 1844 and found success in the brick business which remained in his family for over one hundred years. Bob Howard was born in 1834, the child of Augustus Howard and his first wife Martha Wimberly. A

3 “A Terrible Tragedy,” Columbus Enquirer, November 12, 1890, 5.
4 “Court of Inquiry,” Columbus Enquirer, December 3, 1890, 1.
5 “The Crime is Murder,” Columbus Enquirer, November 13, 1890, 6.
6 “A Terrible Tragedy,” Columbus Enquirer, November 12, 1890, 5.
7 Ibid.
member of the Columbus Guards, he had married Catherine Lindsay, the younger sister of his father’s second wife.\(^8\) The couple moved to Loveland, Ohio in 1880 where he farmed for nine years.\(^9\) Bob had recently returned to Columbus after his wife’s death in 1889 and worked with his younger brother Richard in the livery stable business at the time of the crime.

Investigators found that Bob Howard had purchased a hammerless Smith & Wesson pistol from Mayor Dozier’s own hardware store the week before. Dawson had also recently purchased a hammerless Smith & Wesson in his hometown of Glenville, Alabama. The weapons were designed to be easily drawn from the pocket without getting hung up on a hammer. Bob Howard had also purchased a Bowie knife the week before. The witness who sold it to him loaded the hammerless Smith & Wesson for Bob, as well.\(^10\)

There were four hearings in the case where evidence was given – a coroner’s inquest, a commitment trial, a habeas corpus hearing and the final trial. Most of the hearings took several days and spanned over a year from beginning to end. The coroner’s inquest occurred the day after the murder with preliminary evidence provided. During it, Dr. Griggs testified that he had examined Dawson and found four wounds: three gunshots and a knife wound. One of the gunshot wounds appeared to come from someone behind the victim. The charge of murder was brought by the jury on November 13, 1890.\(^11\)

![Image of the Smith & Wesson Safety Hammerless Revolver](image)

Type of weapon used by both Bob Howard and T.C. Dawson, as advertised in *The Century* magazine, April 1889

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\(^8\) Howard, *Reminiscences*, 4.
\(^9\) Ibid., 63-65.
\(^10\) “Court of Inquiry,” *Columbus Enquirer*, December 3, 1890, 1.
Every aspect of the trial was scrutinized in the press. People were so interested in the trial that even the lack of news generated a story. One article in the local paper proclaimed that there were no new developments and that the date for a trial had not been announced. Several justices found it necessary to recuse themselves before the trial proceeded. The prosecution consisted of Solicitor A. A. Carson, Cary Thornton, William Samford and W.B. Butt. The defense depended on the skills of attorneys Thomas Grimes, Louis F. Garrard, James Worrill, William A. Little, James McNeill and Lionel C. Levy. Some questioned the condition of the suspects’ confinement, judging it too lenient on the grounds that as one of the attorneys served as a county commissioner, preferential treatment had been given. The defendants were kept on the second floor of the Muscogee County Jail building but not in jail cells. The accommodations were explained as being secure as they were “within brick walls, with iron gratings over the windows and an iron sheeted door” and that the commissioner “was never consulted on the matter.”

The preliminary commitment trial or Court of Inquiry commenced on December 1, 1890, and continued for three days. Witnesses were called and their testimony transcribed in the local papers for the captivated public. Colonel Thornton opened for the prosecution stating that they expected to show that this was not just a murder but “a diabolical conspiracy and bloody assassination.” The state made no provision for a stenographer, so, G.Y. Tigner, a reporter for several papers, offered to provide his notes to the court. The offer was accepted. The Court of Inquiry ended on December 4, 1890, and the

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12 “The Late Tragedy,” *Columbus Enquirer*, November 14, 1890, 5.
13 “Justices Disqualify Themselves,” *Columbus Enquirer*, November 29, 1890, 3.
14 “The Commitment Trial Set For Next Monday,” *Columbus Enquirer*, November 25, 1890, 1.
15 “Trial in Progress,” *Columbus Enquirer*, December 2, 1890, 1.
16 Ibid.
defendants were remanded to jail. The defense then worked to get the defendants out on bail to await
the final trial. A writ of habeas corpus was filed almost two weeks later but the only available judge to
hear the case was Allen Fort in Sumter County. The prisoners, defense team, and prosecutors all
boarded the train to Americus to be heard by Judge Fort. At this point, the defense introduced an
affidavit with evidence of the family difficulties, including Mrs. Dawson’s (the former Miss Ruth Howard)
commitment to an insane asylum. The prosecution asked for a continuance of ten days to obtain
witnesses for the new evidence but the evidence was withdrawn by the defense. In the end, Richard
Howard and James Bickerstaff were released on $15,000 bail each while Robert Howard remained
imprisoned.

The reason for the feud that led to the murder ultimately came to light at the defendants’ next
appearance in court. The final trial opened on November 11, 1891. The prosecution wanted to prove a
conspiracy, and the fact that the three defendants showed up at the Exposition Grounds armed and
acting together seemed to indicate it. As detailed in the trial, the trouble began when forty-one-year-old
Dawson supposedly “dishonored” thirty-six-year-old Ruth, while she was visiting Dawson’s sister who was
also the widow of Ruth’s brother, Tyler. Later, when Ruth’s pregnancy became obvious, her brother
Richard confronted her. At first, Ruth named a married man as the person responsible. Richard refused to
believe it and demanded the name of the true father. Ruth repeated her assertion several times to
Richard but later admitted to her sister, Bettie Joseph, that Dawson was the father. Richard hastily
tracked down Dawson and demanded he marry Ruth to preserve her honor. Richard offered to pay for
them to go to Europe and hide their shame until such time as it would be reasonable to return with a
child.

The couple married in April 1889 but did not leave the area as requested. Instead, they settled in
Glenville, near Dawson’s family. The baby was born but died a short time later. After the birth, Ruth
supposedly told Dawson the child was not his. Dawson and his sister Mrs. Griffith were apparently
charged in the baby’s death. At this point, Dawson abandoned Ruth. Richard retained an attorney in
Alabama to have Dawson charged with the crime of seducing his sister.

During the final trial, the defense switched its claim to self-defense, despite a previous assertion
that a private, family situation justified the killing. The attorneys may have determined that the
defendants were not justified, after all. To help bolster their claim of self-defense, attorney McNeil came
up with the notion that Dawson had a second pistol and that he fired a third shot in the exchange. The
defense painted the assailants as the intended victims of Dawson’s wrath because of the impending

17 “Will Bail Be Granted?,” Columbus Enquirer, December 16, 1890, 1.
18 “Fighting for Release,” Columbus Enquirer, December 17, 1890, 1.
19 “Trial Moves On,” Columbus Enquirer, November 12, 1891, 1.
20 “The Evidence All In,” Columbus Enquirer, November 15, 1891, 2.
21 “Howard-Bickerstaff,” Columbus Enquirer, November 17, 1891, 1.
22 “The Evidence All In,” Columbus Enquirer, November 15, 1891, 2.
23 “Fifth Day of the Trial,” Columbus Enquirer, November 14, 1891, 1.
seduction charge. With two guns, Dawson appeared to be the most heavily armed of the group and perhaps looking for revenge. However, no extra pistol was ever found and several people testified that Dawson did not even draw his lone pistol until after being stabbed and shot. Dawson was also one of the easiest people to find in Columbus that day. Notice of his participation in the race appeared in that morning’s paper. He would also be a sitting duck at the finish line when the race concluded.

Uncle Bob spoke eloquently in his own defense on the stand. His testimony dramatically concluding with tears in his eyes. He spent much of his time speaking in religious terms. But, he took the opportunity to recognize Mrs. Griffith as “the foul, guilty murderess of her brother’s child” and accuse Dawson of “shirking duty and seducing another pure, virtuous orphan girl” while he and Bickerstaff were fighting in front of Atlanta. Unlike their victim, Bob Howard and James Bickerstaff served in the Confederate Army, joining early in the war. Bickerstaff literally gave his left arm to the cause and Bob’s loyalty to the Lost Cause never wavered. The defense may have sensed some indication of sympathy for the old soldier when he spoke of his service to the Confederacy. Attorney Grimes built on the idea adding “Why, they want these men hanged because they were in the army. Can’t a man fight in the Confederate Army and then kill the betrayer of his sister, and be justified?” Attorney Garrard continued the theme the next day saying “The time will actually come when they will want to hang us for serving the Confederate Army.” Suddenly, the Howards were defending the South’s honor as much as their own.

It took about a day for the jury to make their decision. Late in the afternoon of November 19, the jury reported that it found the defendants not guilty on all charges. Their acquittal was received with tears and rejoicing by their friends and family. The brazen killers were greeted with kisses and Richard was hoisted up on the shoulders of his supporters. The reputation of Ruth and the Howard family had been preserved in what was nothing less than an honor killing; a case of vigilante justice similar to a lynching except that the angry mob is replaced by the victim’s own family. The outcome is the same.

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25 “The Evidence All In,” Columbus Enquirer, November 15, 1890, 2.
26 Ibid.
27 “Howard-Bickerstaff,” Columbus Enquirer, November 17, 1890, 1.
28 “Drawing to a Close,” Columbus Enquirer, November 18, 1891, 1.
29 “They Are Not Guilty,” Columbus Enquirer, November 20, 1891, 1.
Uncle Bob with grand nephew Augustus Howard Bickerstaff in Confederate gray, as mascot of the Camp Benning-UCV Reunion in Columbus, 1910. From *Reminiscences*. 
After the trial, Bob became very active in Camp Benning, the local chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, representing them at several reunions and serving on various committees. He gave a rousing speech at a temperance rally and became a fixture at Memorial Day observances. Annie Garrard, the wife of one of his defense attorneys, was elected president of the Ladies Memorial Association in 1896 and Bob was selected to give the Memorial Day address at the Springer Opera House the next year. Another of his defense attorneys, Thomas Grimes, introduced his speech. And, as a self-proclaimed “unreconstructed rebel,” Bob spoke glowingly of the Lost Cause.30 He went on to deliver the Memorial Day addresses in Talbotton, Hawkinsville, Barnesville, Albany, Hamilton, Cuthbert, Pensacola, and Dawson between 1903 and 1911. He also made Robert E. Lee Memorial addresses in 1899, 1909, 1910 and 1911.

Uncle Bob used his new found legitimacy to endorse the revision of the Memorial Day origin story. He took one chapter of his autobiography entirely from the booklet The History of the Origin of the Memorial Day Holiday published by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and championed by Mrs. Garrard.31 The booklet promoted a new origin story of the holiday where Lizzie Rutherford is the suggestor of the holiday over her cousin Mrs. Charles J. Williams and coincided with the 1898 observance of Memorial Day.32 Both contenders in this dispute were also cousins of Bob in that they were all descended from John Howard, Bob’s grandfather.

Bob Howard wasn’t known as “Uncle Bob” at the time of his trial. There were other pundits already using that name. One of them was Robert Hardeman who served as State Treasurer and whose comments frequently appeared in the papers.33 Hardeman died in December 1896, leaving the moniker open to someone with an even stronger claim to it. While it sounds like an affectionate nickname, in Bob Howard’s case, it was much more than that. His relationship to his father, through his father’s second wife, is similar to the Latham and Jaffe song I’m My Own Grandpa. As his step-mother’s sister, Bob’s wife was also his aunt. As the husband of his aunt, Bob was his own uncle. This meant that his co-defendant and half-brother Richard was also his nephew.34 Uncle Bob seems to have taken the name prior to 1899 when he spoke at his first Robert E. Lee Memorial.35 He appeared in the newspaper regularly for several years commenting on politics, the Lost Cause, and Camp Benning issues. He continued speaking and writing letters back home with his opinions and observations during a brief move to the Indian Territory of Oklahoma with his daughter between 1906 and 1907.36

30 Robert Howard, Reminiscences, 104-132.
31 “The Origin of Memorial Day; Card from Ladies,” Columbus Enquirer, May 18, 1904, 3.
32 “A History of the Origin of Memorial Day,” Columbus Enquirer, April 27, 1898, 2; A History of the Origin of Memorial Day as Adopted by the Ladies’ Memorial Association of Columbus, Georgia (Columbus, GA.: Thos. Gilbert, 1898).
33 “Death Claims A Noble Man,” Columbus Enquirer, December 3, 1896, 1.
34 This relationship is an observation of the author and was not found in any published sources.
35 “Rally ’Round A Memory,” Columbus Enquirer, January 19, 1899, 3.
The defendants were not young men at the time of the trial. Bob was already fifty-seven when he was acquitted. It was not long before they began to meet their ultimate fate. James Bickerstaff passed away in 1906. Uncle Bob died in 1914 and is buried with his wife Catherine in Linwood Cemetery. Ruth Howard died in 1919 without remarrying. Her grave stone makes no mention of the surname Dawson. Richard Howard, the youngest of the group passed away in 1926. As the principals in the story died off, so did the memory of the family feud that ended in a brutal murder witnessed by thousands of people and led to Muscogee County’s own trial of the nineteenth century.
The Old Folks at Home:
Former American Colonists Buried in Columbus, Georgia

Part I: Individuals Born Before 1770, Buried in Linwood Cemetery

By Callie B. McGinnis

On July 4, 1776, the United States officially became a sovereign nation, declaring its independence from the English crown. On that date, the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies were transformed from colonists to U.S. citizens. Some former American colonists eventually became residents of Columbus, Georgia, which was founded in 1828, fifty-two years after the establishment of the United States. What follows is a list of fifteen of those individuals – people who not only resided in the Columbus area in its early years, but who were buried there in the City Cemetery (later known as Linwood Cemetery). This article only deals with such persons who were born before 1770. Plans for two future installments will consider: 1) others buried in Linwood who were born between 1770 and July 4, 1776, and 2) former colonists buried in Columbus, but not in Linwood Cemetery.

Linwood tombstone surveys and the city sextons’ records were the main sources used to compile this list.¹ If the deceased had a legible, marked tombstone, with birth information included, it is fairly easy to ascertain the date of birth. For individuals without tombstones, city sextons’ records were consulted. Since the city sexton buried people in the City Cemetery, not in church or private cemeteries, we can assume that everyone named in those records is buried in Linwood. Unfortunately, before 1866 the records are spotty at best; many years are missing. Consequently, there are, no doubt, many former colonists who lived and died in Columbus who are unknown – buried in unmarked graves in Linwood.

This list excludes African Americans who lived in Columbus, the majority of whom were slaves until the end of the Civil War. The sexton was also responsible for burying blacks in the “Colored Cemetery,” which eventually became “Porterdale Cemetery.” Unfortunately, the sexton did not write down names when recording slave burials. We know, however, that there were a number of African Americans in Columbus who were born in the mid-eighteenth century, as evidenced by tally marks on the early censuses for the city. (Like the sexton, the census takers did not usually write down the names of slaves). The 1850 Columbus Slave Census notes that Columbus resident Elizabeth Guie (perhaps “Guy”)

¹ There are a number of Linwood tombstone surveys: The Mormon survey done in 1943 (available in digital format at www.familysearch.org, see footnote no. 5 for details); the Dolores Autry survey done in the 1990s (Dolores Autry, with Lea Dowd et al, Historic Linwood Cemetery, Columbus, Muscogee County, GA, 3 vols. (Columbus, GA: Dowd, 2006 – 2011); and the Linwood survey undertaken by Historic Linwood Foundation in the early 2000s (available in print copy at the office of Historic Linwood Foundation (HLF) on the grounds of Historic Linwood Cemetery, Columbus, GA). Sextons records for Linwood Cemetery, beginning around 1866, are in card format and available at the HLF Office. Sexton’s records before 1866 were transcribed by Mary Jane Galer and published in her Columbus, Georgia, Lists of People in the Town, 1828 – 1852, and Sexton’s Reports to 1866 (s.l.: Iberian Publishing Co., 2000).
owned a female slave said to be born in 1754. The slave censuses sometimes listed the names of very elderly slaves; in the case of Mrs. Guie’s slave, the person in question may have been named “Bliss.”

Another group not included in this list is Native Americans. Since the Muscogee County region was home to the Creek Indians in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the remains of many Native Americans lie buried in and around Columbus at unmarked sites. Native Americans, of course, would not be considered colonists. One known Native American gravesite, located across the Chattahoochee River, in Russell County, Alabama, is that of Little Prince, a Creek Indian Chief, born around 1762 and died in 1832. His grave is on private property and is unmarked.

The list below was compiled, primarily, from the 1943 Mormon survey of Linwood Cemetery and the pre-1866 City Sextons’ Records, transcribed by Galer. Other sources, such as family trees at Ancestry.com and old Columbus newspapers, were consulted for additional information. Arrangement of the list is by birth order. Note that “ca.” ("circa") is used for date of birth, when only the age at the time of death was given.

**Former Colonists, Born Before 1770, Buried in Linwood Cemetery**

**UNKNOWN FEMALE, born ca. 1743.**
On May 24, 1846, the sexton of Columbus buried a woman who was 103 years old. Her name is not stated in the record. She was probably buried in Linwood Cemetery in an unmarked grave. The cause of her death was diarrhea.²

**GAMMEL, Mrs. Elizabeth, born between 1744 and 1751.**
She was the wife of Samuel Gammel, who died in South Carolina in 1804. In 1850, Mrs. Gammel was living with her sixty-year-old son Ayres and his family in Talbot County, Georgia. Her age is listed that year as 99; she was born in Pennsylvania. The Columbus City Sexton’s Record gives her age as 113 at the time of her burial on September 28, 1859, while her obituary says that she was 115 when she died. Her obituary notes that she was the grandmother of A. [Abraham] Gammel and calls her “a connecting link between the Revolutionary struggle of our forefathers and the present generation.” Some sources say her maiden name was Ayres (also the first name of her eldest son). Mrs. Gammel’s grave in Linwood Cemetery is unmarked.³

²Mary Jane Galer, *Columbus, Georgia, Lists of People in the Town, 1828 – 1852, and Sexton’s Reports to 1866* (s.l.: Iberian Publishing Co., 2000), 263. Note: Galer explains that for most of 1843 and from March 1846 through December 1846, the Sexton’s Reports do not list names (p. 179).
FOSTER, George Wells, born June 4, 1751.
Foster was a Revolutionary Soldier who was born in Prince Edward Co., Virginia, and died May 31, 1847 in Columbus.

George Foster...served in the Prince Edward county militia, Captain John Morton's Company. After the Revolution he joined Virginians who migrated to the choice lands in Georgia and settled in Greene County where he made a name for himself as a landowner and lawyer. After removing to Muscogee County to be near his family, he continued a legal practice and died in 1847. A large funeral attended his passing. Living descendants reside in Columbus and vicinity.⁴

In Greene County, Foster served as a Justice of the Peace in the 1790s and represented Greene County at the 1798 Georgia Constitutional Convention. He is buried in Linwood Cemetery, with a headstone.⁵

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Grave of George Wells Foster, Historic Linwood Cemetery.
SCROGGINS, Mrs., born ca. 1757.
Mrs. Scroggins was buried in Linwood Cemetery on January 26, 1854. She died at the age of 97 from “Old Age.” Nothing else is known about her. She may have had a connection to James M. Scoggins, who was born in 1810, Georgia, and resided in Muscogee Co., GA in 1840 and 1850. He owned five slaves between the years of 1846 and 1852; their names were Matilda, Harriet, Lucy, Allen and Amanda. Mrs. Scroggins’ grave is unmarked.6

DENNIS, Mrs., born ca. 1759.
Mrs. Dennis was buried March 30, 1857, in Linwood Cemetery. She was 98 years old at the time of her death and died of “Infirmity.” Her first name and the first name of her husband are unknown. Her grave is unmarked.7

MCGEE, William, born ca. 1761.
William McGee was born in Ireland. The date of his arrival to America is unknown; he may have arrived after 1776, and, thus, may not have been an American colonist. He served as Columbus City Sexton in 1837–38, and died February 12, 1838, at the age of 77 years. His wife, Cass Ann McGee served as the Hospital Supervisor in the 1840s; her daughter Isabel held that position in the 1850s. McGee is buried in a marked grave in the McGee plot in the Old Section of Linwood with his wife and a number of their children.8

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7 Galer, 197.
MEIGS, Clara (Mrs.), born May 5, 1762.

Born in Stratford, Connecticut, Clara was the daughter of Col. John Benjamin and wife of Josiah Meigs, whom she married on January 21, 1782. Josiah Meigs was a professor at Yale when they married. The couple later moved to Georgia, where Josiah became professor and president at Franklin College (which later became the University of Georgia); he resigned in 1810 and was later appointed Surveyor General of the United States by President James Madison. The Meigs’ daughter, also named Clara, married John Forsyth, who became governor of Georgia. Both Clara (Mrs. Josiah) and Clara Forsyth are buried in Linwood Cemetery. Clara Meigs died August 18, 1849. The sexton’s record says she was 88 years old.⁹

Linwood graves of Mrs. Clara Meigs on the left and, on the right, that of her daughter Clara Meigs Forsyth (1784-1853), wife of Governor John Forsyth of Georgia (1780-1841). Gov. Forsyth is buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C.
DAVIS, Mrs., born ca. 1763.
Mrs. Davis was buried in an unmarked grave in Linwood October 11, 1857; she died at the age of 94. The name is noted as both Davis and David. There is a remote possibility that this might be Lucinda Jane Davie, wife of Joseph Davie, who is thought to have died in Columbus after 1833. While living in Columbus, in 1833, Davie submitted an application for a Revolutionary War pension, which was rejected. Some sources say Joseph’s wife was Lucinda Jane Smith.10

ALLEN, James (Rev.), born July 26, 1764.
According to his tombstone in Linwood Cemetery, Rev. Allen was born in Virginia. A Revolutionary Soldier, he lived in Wilkes, Warren, and Meriwether counties in Georgia before settling in Russell County, Alabama, where he died July 12, 1851. In 1850, he was living in Russell County with his son John W. Allen and family, and was listed as being 84 (i.e., born in 1766). During his lifetime he was both a minister and a physician.11 The following sketch of Rev. Allen appeared in the 1953 summer issue of the Alabama Historical Quarterly:

In early life he followed the carpenter’s trade and assisted in erecting the first State house in Richmond, Virginia. The last half of his active life was devoted to the gratuitous practice of medicine. This necessity arose from the scarcity of regular physicians in the early days. It is known that he rode day and night, during the sickly season, to meet the calls of the suffering, furnishing medicine at his own expense and never charging a cent for his services. He was very successful in his practice, though he never made medicine a study until it became necessary and never graduated from any school of medicine, except that of the saddle and the sick bed. He died in 1857, at the residence of his son, near Smith’s Station, aged 87 years. He was as useful, as a minister of the Gospel, as he was a physician, and the work of his hands will fruit on and on, and ripen in eternity.12


THOMPSON, Elizabeth (Mrs.), born ca. 1764.

In October of 1850, Elizabeth Thompson was living in Columbus with the family of Henry M. Harris, a boot maker who had been born in New York in 1798. Harris, known as “Drummer Harris,” was an interesting character who served in five U.S. Wars; he is buried in Section 1, Lot 262 (purchased by the Columbus Guards) in an unmarked grave. Harris’s wife Elizabeth (born GA in 1814) may have been Mrs. Thompson’s daughter. In the 1850 census, Mrs. Thompson’s age is noted as 75; her place of birth, Georgia. Mrs. Thompson was buried in Linwood on May 17, 1854; she died at the age of 90 years of “Old Age”. Her grave is unmarked.13

BRANNAN, Edward, born ca. 1765.
Sexton’s records indicate Mr. Brannan, a native of Ireland, was buried August 1, 1863; he was 98 years. Many of the Brannans in Columbus were Roman Catholic. Perhaps there is mention of him in Columbus Catholic church records. He is buried in Linwood in an unmarked grave.14

ROBINSON Jane, born ca. 1767.
Jane Robinson was buried in Linwood on March 25, 1850, at the age of 83. No other information is available. She is not in the 1850 mortality schedules and her grave is unmarked.15

FLETCHER, Mrs., born ca. 1769.
Mrs. Fletcher was buried in an unmarked grave on December 16, 1859. She died at the age of 90 of “Old Age.” Nothing else is known of her.16

KENNY, Michael, born ca. 1769.
Born in County Carlow, Ireland, Michael Kenny died in Columbus on May 23, 1861, at the age of 92. He was the father of Thomas Kenny, an Irish stone mason who created many ornamental tombstones in Linwood Cemetery. Michael’s detached tombstone rests in the Adams plot, where Patrick Adams, another Irish stone mason, is buried. Son Thomas Kenny is thought to be buried in Rosemere Cemetery in Opelika, AL.17

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14 FAG - 180093478, accessed March 5, 2018; Galer, 236.
15 Galer, 185.
16 Galer, 220.
PIKE, James, born ca. 1769.

Born in Edgefield, SC around 1769, James Pike was in Columbus by 1840; that year one member of his household (perhaps Pike himself) was involved in manufacturing and trade. Pike was living in Columbus in 1850 with his daughter Telitha, who had married John Newsome in Harris Co., GA, in 1845. Pike died of “Old Age” and was buried on Feb. 25, 1852. He is buried in Linwood Cemetery in an unmarked grave.\(^{18}\)

The last six months or so have been quite the maelstrom at the Archives, both figuratively and literally. For those that may not have heard yet, there was a flood on the third floor of the CSU Library, where the Archives is located. Due to the installation of a much-needed new roof, one of the roof drains somehow became dislodged, leaving a large open hole for water to spill into. Over the Labor Day weekend last September, water flowed into the Archives, affecting nearly three hundred boxes. It was a shocking sight. A colleague of mine told me “It’s never as bad as it first looks, but never as good as you might hope.” He was right. The majority of boxes absorbed the water so that their contents were not damaged. However, around fifty boxes were completely soaked. Archives staff members were notified of the incident that Sunday and immediately began cleanup and recovery along with a contracted cleaning crew. Industrial vacuums removed all standing water and a dehumidification chamber was set up to house the wettest material in an effort to draw moisture out of the documents. Since then, the roof drains in and around the Archives have all been replaced, and the library roof replacement is now finished. Thus, moving forward, we are confident there will not be a repeat incident.
Concerning our archival material, we have addressed nearly all those that were most damaged. The vast majority of material (over 90%) is fine, other than some wrinkling and staining. However, there are some items, especially those with glossy coatings (photographs) that became glued together from the moisture. We are exploring methods for preserving these items and are optimistic that they will be recoverable.

On a more positive note, some of you may have heard rumors about a renovation in our near future. We were allocated money by the Georgia legislature during its last session for renovation planning. The university selected an architectural firm last fall, and we will be working with them this spring and into the summer months. We have already developed several concepts that I am very optimistic about. The current timeline calls for the architectural plans to be finished by June so that construction could start at the beginning of the new fiscal year this July. However, it is important to note that we do not at this time have construction funding. That money has yet to be allocated by the legislature, but we are confident it will be secured. If all things go as planned, construction would last for roughly a year and finish June of 2019.

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If the U.S. Naval Academy and graduate school have anything in common, it is a tradition of teaching young people how to be cruel. In case of the former, Jimmy Carter experienced the tradition of hazing plebes. In graduate school, professors teach aspiring academics to scour texts for signs of weakness. The harshest criticism is reserved for books that do not fit academic models, standards, or conform to the latest trends. It would be shortsighted and unfair to review *Jimmy Carter: Elected President with Pocket Change and Peanuts* the same way as a monograph written by a historian. It is an informal book, written for a general audience and it is designed to be both informative and commemorative. For that reason, Padgett’s book is more powerful than a biography or a history: it represents a historical memory—both personal and collective—of the journey from Georgia to the White House and back again from the perspective of a foot soldier in the “peanut brigade” of Carter supporters.

Padgett—a political activist, member of the peanut brigade, and a long-time friend of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter—triumphs in creating an engaging, readable book that combines biography and autobiography. The author interweaves the familiar narrative of Jimmy Carter’s political career and the Carters’ humanitarian work with the less-familiar story of the “people power” or those who “trusted him and were willing to work hard for him” (49). In writing this book, she combines both Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter’s published writings with newspaper accounts and interviews with people close to the Carter family. While the excerpts from books, articles and interviews tend to be more extensive than most books, the effect is a useful, “curated” book. This approach allows Padgett to bring together scores of different voices and let those sources speak without too much interruption. This is a refreshing approach that will appeal to a general audience. It is this sort of layered historical and personal narrative that will make this book valuable for current and future generations of readers.

The book is at its best when it interjects personal accounts from Padgett’s memory, especially in the gubernatorial and presidential elections. Many of these anecdotes are quite amusing. One story retells how Padgett, Rosalynn Carter, Jackie Lassiter, and Miss Lillian Carter escaped from a restaurant in Savannah during the 1970 gubernatorial campaign. Shocked by menu prices that went beyond their
budget, the first three women told the hostess various excuses at the door. "Miss Lillian," Padgett writes, "said that she did not feel the need to tell the hostess anything, she just walked out" (41). In another, Padgett recalls a terrifying flight in a small plane from Thomson to the Atlanta Airport. She concludes, "As luck would have it there was no need for a newspaper announcement that Rosalynn Carter and Miss Lillian Carter and an unidentified person had been killed in a plane crash" (63).

At other times, Padgett shows how the passage of time softens the more stressful memories. Padgett resents how the press treated the Carters, including the editor of the Atlanta Constitution and especially the infamous "lust" article in Playboy Magazine. She writes that Rosalynn Carter "was furious," but also shows how time turned outrage into humor, at least for President Carter. Drawing on a joke first published in The Virtues of Aging, Padgett writes of the "young attractive woman" at a book signing who said to Carter, "I remember that interview you did in Playboy magazine. If you still have lust in your heart, I am available" (239). Padgett captures Rosalynn’s humor in an excerpt from an earlier interview. The Carters learned in the process of coauthoring Everything to Gain that writing was a passion they preferred to practice alone. Rosalynn apparently said, "I thought we’d have a really powerful, successful book if the last chapter described our divorce" (351). Both stories, whether real or apocryphal, help humanize the Carters to readers.

Historical memory almost always entails selection and a book that combines biography and autobiography requires choices. Padgett revels in the highpoints while downplaying or avoiding the shortcomings of Carter’s political career. When discussing disappointment, Padgett remains relentlessly positive and upbeat. Overall, she accomplishes a lot in a book that navigates Carter’s early years, the campaign of 1976, the White House years, a disappointing loss in 1980, and the tenacity of the couple’s humanitarian work: eradicating illness, monitoring elections, and other activities that put their spiritual convictions into physical action. Padgett’s book is a worthwhile contribution. It will appeal to a general readership, especially those who have been inspired by the example of the 39th President and the First Lady from Plains, Georgia.

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