MUSCOGIANA

25th Anniversary

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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 ekhoward@knology.net as a Word document. To be considered for publication, material must be of cultural, historical and genealogical significance to the Columbus/original Muscogee County, Georgia, area that consists of Harris County, Talbot County, Marion County, Chattahoochee County, and the current Muscogee County. 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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From the Editor

With this issue we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Muscogiana. The first issue was published in Spring of 1989, edited by former Bradley Genealogy Room Librarian John Lassiter (now library director at Georgia Northwestern Technical College in Rome, Georgia). It contained an article by Ken Thomas, posthumous pieces by Columbus cemetery guru June Hanna and the legendary T.J. Peddy, along with some Bible records and queries. Originally, the Muscogee Genealogical Society had intended to publish Muscogiana four times a year. That goal was soon revised to two issues a year.

Amazingly, utilizing all volunteer help, the Society has managed publish its journal for the last 25 years – putting out over 50 issues. Please note that on our website, www.muscogeegenealogy.com, there is a cumulative surname index to the entire run, along with a brief subject index to all of the articles. These indexes are compiled by our dedicated member Dan Olds.

So, here in our first issue for 2014, our 25th year, we offer three historical articles and an important genealogy index.

In our first article, Mike Bunn, Executive Director of the Historic Chattahoochee Commission, presents an article on the Olmsted–designed gardens of the grounds of the William C. Bradley estate – now the Columbus Museum. Mike was formerly Curator of History at the Museum.

The second article is by Dr. Craig Lloyd, Emeritus Professor of History and Archivist at Columbus State University. He provides a historical account on Margaret Sullivan: a Columbus resident and scholar on Carson McCullers.

The third article is by the editor. Claflin Elementary School was the first school in Columbus for black students. Established in 1868, the original building is now gone but the present buildings date from 1921 and 1948. Despite its historical importance, the school has been neglected for years and its survival is not assured.

The fourth article is a historical death index, transcribed by Daniel Olds from files at the Muscogee County Health Department. The Health Department file begins August 1890 and is ongoing for all reported Muscogee County deaths. This is an extremely important resource as it contains names from the 19th and early 20th century of Columbus people who may have NOT had an obituary or a tombstone. Dan's index covers from 1890 to 1918. (Note: In 1919, the State of Georgia began collecting the county death certificates from all across the state.) The index is quite large and so must be published in Muscogiana in several installments. This is the first installment.

Edward Howard

On the cover: The photo is of a teacher and students at the former entrance of Claflin Elementary School in the 1920s.
Columbus in Early Nineteenth Century Travel Narratives: Excerpts from C. D. Arfwedson and Charles Lyell

by Mike Bunn

Travel narratives were one of the early nineteenth century’s most popular literary forms. In an age prior to photographs and in which leisure travel was a luxury very few could experience, travel writers who could paint pictures of their experiences with words offered a unique window on the wider world for readers. Their narratives were valued not only as entertainment, but in a very real sense as an educational resource that could acquaint readers with people and places most would never have an opportunity to visit.

In previous issues of this journal, I have brought to your attention the descriptions of early Columbus by some of the better-known travel writers to have commented on the city. Here, I offer edited narratives of two writers who visited the city in the 1830s and 1840s: one lesser known and one a figure of international fame. The first, British writer Carl D. Arfwedson, set sail from Europe in 1832 on a nearly two-year journey through the United States, making stops in New York, Philadelphia, coastal Virginia, and South Carolina before journeying overland through Georgia and Alabama on his way to the Mississippi River, where he traveled north to the Ohio River. He subsequently visited Canada and Washington, D.C. before returning home. His narrative of his travels in the Chattahoochee Valley is noteworthy in that it chronicles both the city of Columbus and the wider region, especially the areas of what are today Phenix City and Fort Mitchell, with a focus on the people he encountered. His narrative captures the mood and concerns of the people of the area, as he comments on discussions he had or overheard related to everything from the potential for mining gold in Georgia to the conversations of slaves being marched overland for eventual sale at auction.¹ Arfwedson had a real fascination with the region’s Native Americans, and the miserable condition of the area’s Creeks is a focus in his writing. He also devotes a significant amount of space to chronicling the dangerous conditions of the frontier community of “Sodom,” the infamous settlement to which modern Phenix City traces its roots. The hazards of travel in the 1830s are of course a prominent theme as well.

The second narrative comes from the journeys of noted British lawyer and geologist Charles Lyell. An associate of Charles Darwin, Lyell was internationally recognized as a preeminent scientist in the 1840s. He was best known as the author of Principles of Geology, which won him great acclaim for bringing the concept of uniformitarianism - which held that the earth was shaped by processes that were

¹ Arfwedson, C. D., The United States and Canada, in 1832, 1833, and 1834 (London: Richard Bentley; New Burlington Street, 1834).
still in operation - to the public conscience. His first major travel volume, *Travels in North America*, featured his narrative of a wide-ranging trip throughout the eastern coast of North America from Nova Scotia down the Carolinas in 1841-42.\(^2\) In the book, he recorded his observation of geologic features and commented occasionally on the people and cultures with whom he came into contact. Published in two volumes in 1845, the book met with widespread applause. Lyell made a second trip to North America in 1845-46 which included stops all along the east coast again, but also allowed him to see more inland areas of the South and even to travel up the Mississippi River. In the book he again made many scientific observations, but also commented at length on the people, politics, and societies he encountered. His remarks about his trip through western Georgia, made as he headed to Columbus from Macon, focus on the hazards of travel and the geology of the area. With a piercing analysis, however, he also comments on the effects of urban growth on the environment and the impact of the institution of slavery on the economic life of the city.

C. D. Arfwedson

We begin with an excerpt of Arfwedson’s narrative, beginning as he journeys westward through central Georgia on his way towards Columbus:

“A little before midnight I was again in the stage, filled, as usual, with nine travelers, mostly inhabitants of Columbus, returning from Milledgeville, where they had been drawing tickets for lots in the gold region.\(^3\) The conversation turned exclusively on the subject of gold dust and gold bars; calculations of certain incomes, derivable from this source of wealth, were made in the coach, and appeared, at least to them, so clear and infallible, that it would have been easier to convince them that the earth is square, than that they could possibly fail to be possessed, in the course of a few years, of as much of the precious metal as would purchase a kingdom in Europe. I listened for a long time with the greatest attention to these lofty statements and illustrative plans, and was just on the eve of joining the general conversation, with a view to obtain some further information respecting these valuable gold regions, when a very sudden and serious shock at one end of the coach demolished at once all aerial castles and golden dreams, and directed the attention of every one to his personal safety... The driver, who had probably also been indulging in the same happy dreams, having himself drawn a prize in the golden lottery, had unfortunately missed his way in the dark, and did not discover his error till the carriage was fairly jammed between two old trees, which squeezed the frail vehicle so dreadfully that the axletree was broken in pieces...”


\(^3\) Gold was discovered in north Georgia in 1829, beginning what is often recognized as the nation’s first “gold rush.” The discovery hastened the pace of the removal of the Cherokees from their ancestral lands in northern Georgia, portions of whose lands were distributed to the public via lotteries similar to the system used to award grants in the Columbus region a few years previous.
Without waiting for the break of day, I continued my journey on foot, in company with one of the passengers well acquainted with the road. During this compulsory promenade, I had frequent opportunities of contemplating the wild and uniform appearance of these uncultivated regions. From a soil almost exclusively of sand, rose a close dark wood, the height of whose trees bespoke venerable age. Here and there the loose and dry sand varied a little; a verdant swamp was seen enveloped in fog, through which drooping cypresses rose like ghosts at a gloomy distance. Nearer to Columbus, the country became more hilly; the Alleghany Mountain chain, which may be called the back-bone of North America, here commences in a long series of sloping hills, above and round which the road winds in various directions.

It was at the foot of one of these hills that I fell in with a gang (as they are called) of slaves, on their march to New Orleans, for sale. The slave-trader had chained them two and two together, and so disposed of them during the few hours in the night allowed for rest after the day’s fatigue, that none of them could possibly escape the watchful eyes of the owner or his assistant. A great number of these miserable beings were seated round a large fire, attentively listening to each other’s narratives: others were lying in groups, absorbed in profound sleep. At the further extremity, near a tree, was the slave-trader himself, looking sternly at his victims, and now and then roaring to them to be quiet. He was not, however, able to quell the general mirth that prevailed, occasioned by the lively anecdotes related by a young slave, about twenty, to his companions in misfortune: laughter and signs of approbation continued without interruption. Yes, bursts of laughter made the whole wood ring. Who would have supposed that these were slaves, going to a market for sale? Without being perceived, we approached this singular group. They were all without any head-covering, but pretty decently dressed in linen clothes, in my opinion rather too light for winter, but with which they seemed perfectly satisfied. Real joy was expressed in every countenance, and they gave way to fits of laughter, which made their eyes sparkle with tears...

The kindled fire spread its pale light over the bushes in the neighborhood, and between the bald fir-trunks stood a tall, swarthy, and wild-looking figure—it was an Indian of the Creek race...The strong impression which this meeting produced will not be easily effaced. I had in my subsequent travels frequent opportunities of seeing these sons of the forest, but never did they appear to me so formidable, so noble, so majestic, as this solitary Indian. His head was covered with a kind of red woolen turban, the ends of which hung down on one of his shoulders: on his legs he wore a kind of stockings, made of skins, and his feet were covered by a pair of handsome moccasins. He was wrapped in a blanket, which, nevertheless, did not prevent my seeing his strong, well-proportioned, and athletic figure. His height and martial air—the expression of his countenance—his features—were all noble and grand. Could this really be a savage?

My travelling companion, who had often seen Indians, was not seized with the same degree of admiration as myself, and lost no time in asking him the motive of his sudden appearance. The reply destroyed the illusion as quickly as his person had at first prepossessed me. Whisky was now the only
deity he worshipped: for the possession of it he would sell father, children, and country. How much more delighted should I have been, had I seen him raise his tomahawk, and, foaming with rage, demand the blood of the Whites, instead of begging for a compound which, like slow poison, undermined his constitution, enervated the sinewy arm, and made the free hero an object of contempt, commiserated by none. Hardly had he received the wished-for liquor, before he eagerly put the bottle to his mouth, and ran away from us, carrying off the few remaining drops. Unhappy man! His draught was his death. In the course of the following day his corpse was found close to a fire in the middle of the wood...he must have fallen asleep in an intoxicated state too near the fire, and been either suffocated or burnt to death.4

On the eastern bank of the River Chattahoochee is a small town called Columbus, which, founded so recently as the year 1828, has not yet attained so much celebrity as to have a place allotted to it in all the maps of the United States. Numbers of Americans know not that such a town exists...Columbus still ranks among the smaller towns, without any pretension to fame, though it may not be doomed to remain long in obscurity. Its rapid increase in population, wealth, and trade, may probably soon bring it on the grand stage of the world..."

"...The situation of the town is on the confines of Georgia and Alabama, and on the river Chattahoochee, which is navigable as far as the Gulf of Mexico. This river, on which four steamers are continually plying, has been of such infinite advantage to this place, that it may already be called a flourishing town. The population exceeded two thousand, and among them were several that might be denominated wealthy. The number of the inhabitants was augmenting monthly, and the increase of commerce, I was assured, was in the same proportion. Carpenters, masons, and workmen of every kind, were never without employment, and could not erect houses fast enough. Streets, which in 1828 were only marked out, were now so filled with loaded wagons that it was next to impossible to pass.5 The principal street which traverses the city, following the course of the river is, like the rest, not paved, but has so many shops filled with a variety of goods, such a number of neat houses, and, finally, in the mornings such a concourse of people, Christians and Indians, that it can hardly be believed that it is the same street which was only marked out in 1828. Most of the houses were of wood, and some of brick: a few in the English style, others again in the Grecian style. The hotels are, perhaps, the worst buildings in the town: I resided in one, the staircase of which bore a strong resemblance to a fire-ladder, and the bed-room, although provided with window-frames, had no panes of glass in them.

Commerce is also on the increase, and will be still more flourishing, when the neighbouring tract of land in Alabama, bought by the State from the Indians, but which they had not yet quitted, is brought

4 It was a common stereotype during Arfwedson's time that local Creeks had grown reliant to a dangerous extent on liquor. While he did observe that liquor played an alarmingly central role in the life of many Creeks, it must be remembered that his observations were no doubt colored by conversations with local citizens, many of whom for a variety of reasons were quick to dismiss Creeks as less than civilized.

5 Arfwedson was familiar with Basil Hall's account of visiting the site of Columbus as the town was being laid out in 1828 (Travels in North America), and referenced it specifically in his text.
into cultivation. At the northern extremity of the town, the river forms several falls, which are made available for working cotton-factories. The goods are conveyed by the steamers to a seaport at the mouth of the river called Apalachicola, where they are re-shipped for exportation.

The manners of the people were uncouth to a degree, which made it equally disagreeable and hazardous for a civilized person to remain in Columbus. Many individuals, there called gentlemen, would in other places receive a very different appellation. The proximity of the Indian territory on the other side of the river contributed not a little to the toleration among the inhabitants of a certain number of loose persons, on which account morals were at the lowest ebb. Opposite to the town, on the Alabama shore, a number of dissolute people had founded a village, for which their lawless pursuits and atrocious misdeeds had procured the name Sodom. Scarcely a day passed without some human blood being shed in its vicinity; and not satisfied with murdering each other, they cross the river clandestinely, and pursue their bloody vocation even in Columbus. Peaceable citizens are thus often attacked, not only in the streets or in the woods, but in their own houses: in vain do they look for reparation or protection from the authorities of the town. The delinquents of Sodom are exempt from all prosecution, their village being situated on the Indian territory, and as such under no control. Temerity, courage, and boldness, alone command respect from these banditti: mildness, virtue, and beauty, are in their eyes so many contemptible attributes, which they conceive they have a right to violate with impunity. The manner of living has meanwhile, by the frequent occurrence of these atrocities, acquired a degree of insecurity, which obliges everyone to carry arms about his person, and to be prepared for defense at a moment's warning.

When laws have so little power to protect the lives of citizens, necessity makes it obligatory to obtain justice by personal efforts; and, when this alternative unfortunately occurs, passions generally gain the ascendency, and, as a consequence, the contest on both sides too often terminates in blood. The most trifling difference not infrequently occasions murders of the blackest dye, and when the crime is consummated, the offender hastens across the river to Sodom, boasting of his deed, and scoffing at the lamentations of the relations and friends of the murdered victim...With such neighbors, it certainly is not surprising that the citizens of Columbus should preserve a certain uncouthness of manners, peculiar to a place that has just sprung up in a forest, but which, from its rapid progress, ought to have already disappeared, if the vicinity of Sodom had not a certain degree retarded the advance of civilization . . . "

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The name "Sodom" appears to have been a locally-popular name of derision given to the frontier community of Girard in reference to its supposedly wild and lawless character as a community located within the bounds Creek territory. Much of Arfwedson's commentary on the community must be taken with a grain of salt, as it was no doubt influenced by conversations with locals. Even by the standards of frontier towns in the South during the era, however, Girard appears to have been a place of violence that many criminals did retreat to in order to be somewhat out of reach of immediate legal authority.
"... After remaining in this town a few days, I continued my journey towards the West in a carriage drawn by one horse, accompanied by a boy seven years old as guide. No road in all America can be compared with that between Columbus and Fort Mitchell. I had often been told that this was the worst piece of ground in the Southern States, and this account I found, by woeful experience, to be by no means exaggerated: it is a real matter of surprise how a vehicle can move forward one hundred yards. Too often I lost every trace of the road, and had to guess the path by certain incisions in the bark of thick fir-trees. On one occasion, the highway leading over a dilapidated old bridge, probably thrown across by the Indians, both horse and carriage were precipitated into the river, and it was a miracle that we were not drowned.

Fort Mitchell is a small fort thrown up in the middle of the wood, with a few barracks, where the Federal Government generally maintains a company of soldiers to keep the neighbouring Indians in check. This garrison had, shortly before my arrival, received orders to break up and march towards South Carolina, the Nullification party having about this time assumed a threatening attitude. Fort Mitchell was, therefore, for the present evacuated; but a young Indian, who had probably for a long while regarded the white-skinned strangers with feelings of dislike, now determined to be revenged, and had taken formal possession of the fort. I saw him for some time with a musket on his shoulder, march to and fro between the barracks, as if mounting guard. Woe to him who approached! ...

"... Towards noon I arrived at a small hut, where a few dozen intoxicated Indians had assembled, and were engaged in bartering several fine deer, recently killed, for a certain quantity of whisky. They were in a state of insensibility from the effect of liquor long before the bargain was concluded; and the conscientious white merchant adroitly availed himself of their situation, to turn the exchange to his own advantage. Never, assuredly, had whisky brought a higher price, or deer been so depreciated in value. Both parties, however, appeared satisfied with the contract, and separated peaceably.

In this hut, the only one for a distance of twenty miles in the wood, preparations were made for dinner, the most singular of its kind I ever sat down to. In the middle of the table was placed a bottle of whisky, of which both host and hostess partook in no measured quantity, before they tasted any of the dishes. Pigs' feet pickled in vinegar formed the first course; then followed bacon with molasses; and the repast concluded with a superabundance of milk and bread, which the landlord, to use his own expression, washed down with half a tumbler of whisky. The landlady, a real Amazon, was not a little surprised to see a person refusing such a delicacy as bacon swimming in molasses, and shrugged her shoulders at my perverted taste. But when, soon afterwards, I also declined eating the black bread
soaked in whisky, her astonishment had no bounds; she lost all patience, and declared that such treatment was beyond endurance, after she had taken the trouble to cook for strangers. Little pleased with each other, we separated; for my part, I felt no desire ever to return to this habitation, and was happy when the wood at length intercepted this miserable hovel from my view.”

Charles Lyell

Travelling over a decade later, Charles Lyell followed a route similar to that of Arfwedson as he made his way across western Georgia from Macon. Entering what was then still viewed as very much a frontier after departing Macon, Lyell was bound for Columbus when we pick up his narrative.

"For the first time, we remarked that our friends, on parting, wished us a safe journey, instead of a pleasant one, as usual ... Our coach was built on a plan almost universal in America, and like those used in some parts of France, with three seats, the middle one provided with a broad leather strap, to lean back upon. The best places are given to the ladies, and a husband is seated next to his wife. There are no outside passengers, except occasionally one sitting by the driver's side. We were often called upon, on a sudden, to throw our weight first on the right, and then on the left side, to balance the vehicle and prevent an upset, when one wheel was sinking into a deep rut. Sometimes all the gentlemen were ordered to get out in the dark, and walk in the wet and muddy road. The coachman would then whip on his steeds over a fallen tree or deep pool, causing tremendous jolts, so that my wife was thrown first against the roof, and then against the side of the lightened vehicle, having almost reason to envy those
who were merely splashing through the mud. To sleep was impossible, but at length, soon after daybreak, we found ourselves entering the suburbs of Columbus; and the first sight we saw there was a long line of negroes, men, women, and boys, well dressed and very merry, talking and laughing, who stopped to look at our coach. On inquiry, we were told that it was a gang of slaves, probably from Virginia, going to the market to be sold.

Columbus, like so many towns on the borders of the granitic and tertiary regions, is situated at the head of the navigation of a large river, and the rapids of the Chatahoochie (sic) are well seen from the bridge by which it is here spanned. The vertical rise and fall of this river, which divides Georgia and Alabama, amounts to no less than sixty or seventy feet in the course of the year; and the geologist should visit the country in November, when the season is healthy, and the river low, for then he may see exposed to view, not only the horizontal tertiary strata, but the subjacent cretaceous deposits, containing ammonites, baculites, and other characteristic fossils. These organic remains are met with some miles below the town, at a point called “Snake’s Shoals;” and Dr. Boykin showed us a collection of the fossils, at his agreeable villa in the suburbs. In an excursion which I made with Mr. Pond to the Upotoy (sic) Creek, I ascertained that the cretaceous beds are overlaid everywhere by tertiary strata, containing fossil wood and marine shells.9

The last detachment of Indians, a party of no less than 500, quitted Columbus only a week ago for Arkansas, a memorable event in the history of the settlement of this region, and part of an extensive and

9 The Dr. Boykin referenced here may be James Boykin, whose home, “Rose Hill” gave name to a historic Columbus neighborhood. “Mr. Pond” may be Dr. Asa Pond, a doctor who was prominent in civic affairs and served at one time as Columbus’ “City Physician.” Snake Shoals is located about 30 miles below Columbus.
systematic scheme steadily pursued by the Government, of transferring the Aborigines from the Eastern States to the Far-West. 10

Here, as at Milledgeville, the clearing away of the woods, where these Creek Indians once pursued their game, has caused the soil, previously level and unbroken, to be cut into by torrents, so that deep gullies may everywhere be seen; and I am assured that a large proportion of the fish, formerly so abundant in the Chatahoochie (sic), have been stifled by the mud.

The water-power at the rapids has been recently applied to some newly-erected cotton mills, and already an anti-free-trade party is beginning to be formed. The masters of these factories hope, by excluding coloured men-or, in other words, slaves- from all participation in the business, to render it a genteel employment for white operatives; a measure which places it in a strong light the inconsistencies entailed upon a community by slavery and the antagonism of races, for there are numbers of coloured mechanics in all these Southern States very expert at trades requiring much more skill and knowledge than the functions of ordinary work-people in factories. Several New Englanders, indeed, who have come from North to South Carolina and Georgia, complain to me that they cannot push on their children here, as carpenters, cabinet-makers, blacksmiths, and in other such crafts, because the planters bring up the most intelligent of their slaves to these occupations. The landlord of an inn confessed to me, that, being a carrier, he felt himself obliged to have various kinds of work done by coloured artisans, because they were the slaves of planters who employed him in his own line. 'They interfere,' said he, 'with the fair competition of white mechanics, by whom I could have got the work better done.'

These Northern settlers are compelled to preserve a discreet silence about such grievances when in the society of Southern slave-owners, but are open and eloquent in decanting upon them to a stranger. They are struck with the difficulty experienced in raising money here, by small shares, for the building of mills. 'Why,' say they, 'should all our cotton make so long a journey to the North, to be manufactured there, and come back to us at so high a price? It is because all spare cash is sunk here in purchasing negroes. In order to get a week's work done for you, you must buy a negro out and out for life.'

From Columbus we travelled fifty-five miles west to Chehaw, to join a railway, which was to carry us on to Montgomery...”

Editor's note: Charles Lyell's travel account in his original journal continues, but his commentary on the Chattahoochee Valley ends at this point.

10 The physical removal of the Creek Indians from the lower Chattahoochee Valley was a decades-long saga. While "voluntary" and forced migrations of Creeks occurred in the decade prior to Lyell's visit, a remnant of the Creek tribe managed to evade deportation for many years and in some cases altogether by hiding out or blending in with white society. The details surrounding the deportation Lyell references here, which is well after the mass exodus from the region in the late 1830s, are unknown at this time.
Margaret Sue Sullivan: An Appreciation

By Dr. Craig Lloyd

Margaret Sullivan, who passed away in December, 2012, was a remarkable citizen of Columbus, Georgia. Her papers recently donated to the Columbus State University Archives tell the story of an intellectual and educator whose master's thesis and doctoral dissertation on Columbus writer Carson McCullers enhanced scholars' and general readers' appreciation of her work. Margaret was a progressive politically supporting the Equal Rights Amendment for women and Civil Rights for African-Americans while opposing the escalation of the Vietnam War. After teaching at Jordan High School, she taught literature at Auburn and George Washington Universities in the 1960s and early 1970s. Afflicted with lupus, Sullivan's promising career as a professor of literature was cut short. She returned to Columbus in 1972 and, despite recurrences of the illness, turned her talents to enriching cultural institutions in her home town.

Sullivan's parents moved from Chipley, Georgia, to Columbus in time for Margaret to attend Columbus High School from 1948 to 1952. The CHS yearbook, the Cohiscan of 1952, records the many activities and popularity of the young woman. Photographed multiple times with her infectious grin, "Margie" as she was known then and throughout her life by family and acquaintances, is said to, "amuse herself and others with her wit" and is, "smart but hates to show it." She was a member of the Student Council and the National Honor Society, participated in the School's Debaters Society and Dramatics Club. As President of Les Amis, the French Literature Club, she sent an Easter CARE package to a needy family in France. As project chairman for Amica Tri-Hi-Y, a student charitable organization, she hosted a Christmas party for orphans and donated a CARE package to a Korean child.¹

¹ CARE was a post-WWII American humanitarian organization, Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere.
In the margins of the Cohiscan, many classmates wrote notes that capture the engaging, generous personality which characterized her throughout her life. A girl named Vola remembered "our philosophical musings and all the fun we've had at football games . . . Even when I'm feeling blue, you always seem to cheer me up." Correspondents in later life speak of Margaret's gift for helping them overcome moments of depression. Her younger sister Patricia, for instance, wrote that a family friend "called me last night. She said the greatest gift anybody had ever given her in her entire life was the conversation she had with you, Margie . . . Just to know someone whom she could talk to meant everything to her." Many classmates recognized Sullivan's great potential, encouraging her, as one put it, "to be all you can be."

Sullivan maintained her ties to her CHS classmates through the years. Mitsy Campbell Kovacs was an especial friend who remembered in her Yearbook note "the fun we've had in Dramatics for the last four years." In an organization called "Footlighters," Campbell and Sullivan during their senior year read stories for children once a week on local radio station WRBL. Like Margaret, Mitsy pursued an interesting life in the two decades after high school. After graduating from Northwestern University, she served in

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2 Cohiscan, Columbus High School Yearbook for 1952, copy owned by Margaret Sullivan; Letter Patricia Sullivan Conner to Sullivan, February 2, 1976, Series 1, Box 2, Folder 19, Margaret Sue Sullivan Papers, Columbus State University Archives (hereinafter, MSSP, CSUA).
New York City as personal secretary to the Greek ambassador to the United Nations and then as executive secretary to the Chairman of CBS, Inc., the television broadcaster. In later life, the two friends traveled to Europe on several occasions. Margaret's fondness for her high school friends and experiences led her to organize the 30th Class Reunion. For this occasion, she composed a booklet detailing the geographical and occupational distribution of class members as well as short biographies of many of them. She also had the *Columbus Ledger* publish a letter requesting help finding the addresses of some twenty people she had been unable to locate.

Margaret Sullivan and Mitsy Campbell reading stories for children, *Columbus High School Yearbook, 1952*.

Sullivan first heard of Carson McCullers as a junior at Columbus High. "I had somehow learned about a play on Broadway that was written by a former Columbusite. "As I was taking Dramatics, I asked an English teacher who this Carson McCullers was. The teacher pursed her lips, drew herself up and replied, 'We don't talk about her. She's perverted.'" At home, Margaret found, "Mr. Webster's definition of perverted - 'turned out of one's natural course.'" Frankly that didn't seem such a bad thing . . . Wasn't education all about rescuing us from our natural course and steering us in the ways of the best that had been felt, thought, and discovered in the course of our civilization?"

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3 Mitsy Campbell Kovacs file, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 5, MSSP, CSUA.
4 30th Reunion booklet for Columbus High School Class of 1952, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 5, MSSP, CSUA.
5 Handwritten letter of Sullivan to Elizabeth (last name unidentified), August 18, 1996, Series 1, Box 2, Folder 11, MSSP, CSUA.
Margaret attended Duke University where she became a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest and most prestigious academic honor society in the nation. During her senior year, she wrote a paper on McCullers. After graduating in 1956, she returned to Columbus to teach at Jordan High School several years before attending Auburn University where she wrote her master's thesis, "Carson McCullers: An Analysis of Four Major Works." She taught American literature for several years at Auburn then returned to Duke for her doctorate. Fellowships - she was a James B. Duke Fellow for one year - financed her three years there in the course of which she composed her dissertation, "Carson McCullers, 1917-1947: The Conversion of Experience." During her research, Sullivan had solicited information from Mary Tucker who was McCullers' piano teacher during her high school years in Columbus, 1930-1934. Teacher and pupil were so close that for a time Carson considered a career in music rather than as a writer. Tucker's husband was an army officer at Fort Benning and the couple moved to Lexington, Virginia, where Colonel Tucker was transferred in 1934. The loss of the presence of Mary Tucker was for a time a shattering blow for McCullers although the two corresponded for the rest of Carson's life. Tucker was thus a major source and after many letters and some visits from Margaret the two women became close friends, a relationship that lasted until Tucker's death in 1982.6

In her last year at Duke, Margaret developed a friendship with Lillian Smith, the author of Strange Fruit and Killers of the Dream, both attacks on racism. Margaret visited Smith in her north Georgia rural home and planned to write about her. Sullivan wrote Smith about the defense of her dissertation and revealed her scholarly reading "all in preparation of my courses and work on you: Spiller's Literary History of the U.S., Gilbert Highet's, The Art of Teaching, the poems of Francois Villon in a new translation by Galway Kinnell, and the two volumes of Robert Corrigan's The New Theater of Europe . . ." Sullivan's lively intellect and charm also earned her the friendship of another well-known woman writer, Katherine Anne Porter, whose novel Ship of Fools had been a best-seller in 1962.8

As she was finishing her dissertation, Margaret was troubled by arthritis in her hands, a symptom of lupus. Sister Pat joked in a note of March, 1966, that Margaret "must be pleased with the diagnosis of lupus as it proved she wasn't hypochondriac as we thought." After teaching as an Assistant Professor of Literature at George Washington University for several years, the lupus reappeared in an especially virulent form necessitating Sullivan's return to Columbus in 1972. The attack was so severe that doctors felt they might have to remove one of Margaret's feet and even feared for her life. Although the "foot operation never came off," as she wryly put it later, she did have to spend much of 1972 in the hospital of Emory University in Atlanta. When the disease went into remission, she returned to Columbus and the homes of her mother Cora on Wynnton Road and, after 1982, on Auburn Avenue.9 She lived here the

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6 Mary Tucker correspondence to Sullivan, Series 1, Box 4, Folders 2-9, MSSP, CSUA.
7 Sullivan to Lillian Smith, August 15, 1966, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 8, MSSP, CSUA.
8 Sullivan-Katherine Anne Porter correspondence, October, 1975, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 16, MSSP, CSUA.
9 Letter Patricia Conner to Sullivan, March, 1966, Series 1, Box 2, Folder 18; 1976 handwritten document by Sullivan, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 5, MSSP, CSUA.
rest of her life. Though less severe attacks of lupus recurred from time to time, Sullivan never drew attention to her malady and remained the buoyant and optimistic person she had always been. She continued to do research for a biography of McCullers and lent her skills in support of cultural life in her hometown.

Sullivan was always available for presentations on McCullers or on southern literature in general. She was an effective speaker. In 1961, Dorothy Hatfield, an English Professor at two-year old Columbus College, wrote that she could not thank her enough for "your brilliant talk on McCullers." She praised Margaret's "authoritativeness and for the excellent delivery of your lecture." In November, 1969, while teaching at George Washington University she accepted an invitation to speak before the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington. The program chairman was struck by her "magnificent knowledge of the broad field of American literature" which "gave our discussion a broader scope it would otherwise have lacked. It is easy to see why your students are so enthusiastic in praise of you."10

Margaret had spent many hours in her youth reading the classics of American and European literature at the Bradley Public Library in Columbus. Library Director Loretto Chappell, according to Sullivan's niece Nancy Burgin, "picked out books for her to read that were beyond her age level to stimulate her."11 Later in life, Margaret was pleased to speak at the Library often on McCullers. In her talks, she sought to make accessible for her listeners the major themes in McCullers' fiction. For her, the friend, Clint Atkinson, wrote in 1978 that Britto had written to him, "what an aid and comfort you have been to her and I just author "had the ability to make the reader become all the characters. You can understand how a black woman feels, you can feel a little boy's fears, a dwarf's problems, a giant woman's concerns." According to Sullivan, McCullers "didn't take pride in being an outsider. Her characters . . . were lonely and wanted to belong." Margaret donated first edition copies of McCullers' books and other materials for permanent display in the Library. In 1982, she spearheaded efforts to create an historic marker in front of McCullers' childhood home on Stark Avenue. To finance this effort and others, such as the establishment of the McCullers Center at the home, she established the "Friends of Carson McCullers, Inc."12

When the newly renovated Springer Opera House reopened in 1965, Sullivan lobbied unsuccessfully to have McCullers' play "Member of the Wedding" as its first production. The new theater's first director Charles Jones wrote her in June, 1977, "In my heart I will never forgive myself for not producing "Member" at least during that opening season of the Springer."13 Beyond her interest in McCullers, Margaret worked closely with Betty Britto in her local theatrical projects. A mutual want to add my own  

10 Letter Dorothy Hatfield to Sullivan, November 20, 1961, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 6; Letter Vivian Weiss to Sullivan, November 25, 1969, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 12, MSSP, CSUA.
12 Sullivan quoted in Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, October 10, 1999, Section E, page 7; Sullivan letter to Friends of Carson McCullers, "Series 3, Box 1, Folder 15 MSSP, CSUA.
13 Letter Charles Jones to Sullivan, June 16, 1977, Series 1, Box 2, Folder 1, MSSP, CSUA.
words of appreciation for your interest in her and her work." In 1982, Margaret participated in an eight-
session acting class taught by Britto.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Sullivan in Betty Britto acting class, \textit{Columbus Magazine, September, 1982}}

In 1974-1975, Sullivan collaborated with the Muscogee County School District in bringing eleven
gifted students to her home during after-school hours for a seminar called, "Patterns - A Humanities
Study." The students had weekly sessions at the 1411 Wynnton Road residence for a year. One of the
attendees, John Van Doorn recalls Margaret as a fascinating woman and excellent teacher. He felt
fortunate that he had an instructor who had been a professor at George Washington University. Sullivan
taught her students the relationship between mathematics and music and the classics of western
literature. She was a friendly but firm teacher who did not tolerate inattentiveness and kept students
focused on the subject of the day.\textsuperscript{15}

Denied an academic career by her illness, Margaret thus enjoyed a creative life in Columbus. By all
accounts, she was happy in her various pursuits. However, there was one source of unpleasantness for
her in the person of Virginia Spencer Carr. In the fall of 1969, Carr became an English Professor at
Columbus College. She was a Carson McCullers scholar, intent, like Sullivan on publishing a major
biography on the writer. A Floridian, Carr received her undergraduate education at Florida State
University in 1951, her master's degree at the University of North Carolina, and her doctorate back at
Florida State in 1969. Her dissertation was entitled "Carson McCullers and the Search for Meaning." Carr

\textsuperscript{14} Letter Clint Atkinson to Sullivan, April 7, 1978, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 14; Betty Britto, "Talent Is Not Enough," \textit{Columbus Magazine}, September, 1982, Series, Box 1, Folder 3, MSSP, CSUA.

\textsuperscript{15} "Certificate of Appreciation" to Sullivan presented by Braxton Nail superintendent of Muscogee County School District, Series 1, Box 5, Folder 15, MSSP, CSUA; Craig Lloyd interview with John Van Doorn, April 8, 2014.
had learned of McCullers for the first time while teaching at Armstrong College near Savannah in the early 1960s. Her decision to come to Columbus College was predicated on her desire to have access to Carson's family members and acquaintances still in the area. She published an advertisement in the *Ledger* requesting interviews with people who remembered Carson in her youthful years.\(^{16}\)

In 1970, Carr requested a meeting with Margaret. Sullivan said the meeting was cordial but she made clear to Carr that she would not talk about McCullers because she was writing her own biography. In September, 1970, Mary Tucker notified Margaret that Carr was soliciting information from her. Loyal to "Margie," Tucker had told Carr that all the information she had on McCullers as her piano teacher had been given to Sullivan when she was writing her dissertation. Carr was not one to be denied, however. A trapeze artist at Florida State in 1947 when the school inaugurated its circus program, she had immense vitality and her smiling southern charm belied a powerful will to accomplish her purposes. When she persisted in writing the piano teacher for information, Tucker answered jestingly that Carr should "enquire of a piano teacher as to what Bach repertory would be suitable for a very young and talented piano student."\(^{17}\)

Undismayed, in November, 1970 Carr penned another long letter describing progress on her research. She requested that Tucker allow her to visit, be interviewed, and "choose letters which Margaret had not used."\(^{18}\) Again Tucker refused saying Sullivan had all her information. She wrote Margaret that she "hoped this would produce a cease-fire," for Carr's pressure "is something like living near a volcano." Another major source for Sullivan had been Mary Mercer, McCullers' psychiatrist and friend in the last years of her life. Tucker wrote Margaret that she had received a Christmas card from Mercer on which she had written: "Tonight my doorbell rang and in the freezing rain stood a smiling Mrs. Virginia Carr. I could not shut the door on her. She had my letter saying I would not see her!!! So I sat and listened to her and said nothing for two hours! I am appalled by her nerve."\(^{18}\)

Carr was unapologetic about her aggressive manner. She told colleagues at Columbus College that she had once waited two hours at the doorstep of Katherine Anne Porter before the door was opened to her. Del Presley, an academic friend of Margaret's and also a McCullers scholar, reported that in Jesup, Georgia, Carr had called on a relative of Reeves McCullers, Carson's husband. It was 8:30 a.m. and the individual had just returned from the hospital. Carr had said "I was just passing through... and thought I would drop in on you for a chat." Sullivan later likened this incident to "Hannibal marching into Rome--so laying waste to the place that even Del's closest sources don't want to talk to anybody."\(^{19}\)

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\(^{17}\) Letter Mary Tucker to Sullivan, October 12, 1970, Series 1, Box 4 Folder 6, MSSP, CSUA.

\(^{18}\) Letter Virginia Carr to Tucker, November 15, 1970; Letters Tucker to Sullivan, November 15, 1970 and December 19, 1970, Series 1, Box 4, Folder 6. MSSP, CSUA.

\(^{19}\) Letter Del Presley to Sullivan, January 10, 1972; undated Sullivan handwritten document, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 5, MSSP, CSUA.
Carr and Sullivan had agreements with major New York publishers for their biographies, Carr with Doubleday, Margaret with Scribner’s. It was terribly frustrating for Sullivan, sidelined for much of 1972 with lupus, to know that her vigorous rival was scouring Columbus and environs for information and was planning to submit her manuscript to Doubleday for publication in 1973, although in fact Carr’s *The Lonely Hunter: A Biography of Carson McCullers* did not appear until 1975. Frustration turned to anger, when Del Presley provided evidence in the spring of 1972 that Carr had lifted passages from Sullivan’s 1966 Duke dissertation into her own at Florida State in 1969. Although Carr had cited Margaret fifteen times there were eight paragraphs that clearly should have been placed in quotation marks and attributed to her. To understand Margaret’s bitterness, one example should be cited:

Sullivan:

"At times, he resembles a mechanical doll with a clock ticking inside and a high tiny voice that pipes "me too" no matter what is said. He seems a grotesque child-adult, juxtaposing without confusion the logic of both worlds."

Carr:

"At times, John Henry resembles a mechanical doll with a clock ticking inside and a high, tiny voice that pipes, "me too" no matter what is said. At other times he is like a grotesque child-adult as he juxtaposes without confusion the logic of both worlds."

Sullivan consulted her dissertation adviser at Duke, Arlin Turner, who suggested the course that Margaret followed. In October, 1972, she sent the evidence of plagiarism to John McKinney, Vice Provost and Dean of Duke who brought the matter to the attention of Graduate Dean of Florida State, Robert Johnson. In January, 1973, Johnson reported to McKinney that he had created a committee of English faculty members to review the case and make a recommendation. The committee’s judgment was that punitive action against Carr was inappropriate for her dissertation was "quite different overall from Miss Sullivan and a respectable work." However, the committee felt there were a few instances "where the observation of the rules of scholarship was less than adequate." Carr would be requested to write "an addendum" to be incorporated in her dissertation which would properly quote and cite Sullivan as her source. In the addendum, Carr acknowledged Sullivan and another author. She used the occasion, however, to write a short essay on authors who had written on the subject of, "converting experience into art," citing James Joyce, Leon Edel, and Henry James. This pedantry with its implication that Margaret had not cited all her sources irritated Sullivan who in any case felt the FSU English Department had whitewashed Carr’s wrongdoing.

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20 Two page document prepared by Presley giving paragraphs from Sullivan’s dissertation and almost identical ones from Carr’s unattributed to Sullivan, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 5, MSSP, CSUA.

21 Letter Arlin Turner to Sullivan, July 12, 1972; Letter McKinney to Johnson, October 16, 1972; Letter Johnson to McKinney, January 8, 1973, Series 4 Box 1, Folder 5, MSSP, CSUA.
When *The Lonely Hunter* appeared, Margaret was angered by another Carr *faux pas*. McCullers' childhood friend Helen Harvey had written Carr in August, 1973, that none of Harvey's recollections of Carson be used in her book without her permission. (Sullivan held a copy of this letter) Carr had never sought her permission but used her reminiscences citing Helen Jackson instead of Helen Harvey, a boldly deceitful action. Sullivan sought to damage Carr by bringing her grievances to the attention of the editors of Doubleday before they published *The Lonely Hunter*. When Carr applied for a professorship at Georgia State University in 1985, Margaret informed the chair of the search committee about Carr's transgressions. In both cases, nothing was done. *The Lonely Hunter* became a best-seller and Carr took the position at Georgia State. By this time, Carr had published a biography of writer John Dos Passos. She had moved on and paid little heed to Sullivan and her friends' animosity towards her.

While still in Columbus in 1983, Carr sent a check of $50.00 to Margaret "so that I too may be a member of your Friends of Carson McCullers fund raising activity . . . I would like to do whatever possible to help you . . . in your efforts." She signed the note, "Sincerely, Virginia." Sullivan replied:

"I regret that I must return your check . . . I find the idea that you are, have been, or could be, a friend of Carson McCullers unsupportable. Please do not ever attempt to communicate with me in any way again and please do not ever attempt to involve yourself in any way in any endeavor in which I am involved. Sincerely, MS"  

Sullivan continued her own preparation of a biography of McCullers through the 1980s. In 1977, she spent several weeks at the University of Texas Library in Austin where she perused the McCullers Papers there. Sadly, the biography was never completed. In the last years of her life, she amazed family members and friends with her determination to live a full life in spite of the lupus which returned from time to time. She lectured at Elderhostels on McCullers and Lillian Smith. She enjoyed attending events at the McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians of Columbus State University located at Carson's childhood home on Stark Avenue. She attended meetings of the Muscogee County Library Foundation and the French Lit Club which she had founded. When her body began to fail her mind remained sharp. According to Nancy Burgin, at the 60th Reunion of her Columbus High School Class held in the spring of 2012, she, "was asked if she wanted to say something and just off the top of her head she recited a favorite poem." When she died later that year, members of the French Lit. Club were her honorary pallbearers. She is buried at Parkhill Cemetery in Columbus.  

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22 Copy of letter of from Helen Harvey to Carr, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 5, MSSP, CSUA.
23 Letter Carr to Sullivan, December 8, 1983; Sullivan to Carr, December 10, 1983, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 5, MSSP, CSUA.
Claflin Elementary School
By Edward Howard

On the corner of 5th Avenue and 16th Street sits an all but forgotten building that seems derelict and ominous. Broken windows and boarded up doors serve as a warning to stay out. Yet only a few decades ago it was filled with life, and was identified with laying the foundation for success for thousands. The building is Claflin Elementary School, the first school for black children in Columbus. The present two buildings of the school were built in 1921 and 1948, and the original building (now gone) was built in 1868. When the original building burned in 1958, the school assumed its present form. Presently the school is abandoned and in a state of disrepair, but it was not long ago that it was filled with students and was a source of pride for the Black community and the city as a whole.

The buildings of the Claflin School complex date to 1921 and 1948, but their position within the property boundary, and the shape of the boundary itself, dates back to a series of events going back to its beginning in 1868. Three years after the end of the Civil War and the gaining of freedom, Columbus still had no school for the freedmen. The need was crucial because they had been kept illiterate and without education during the years of their bondage.

Four Organizational Groups form Claflin

The arrangement for the creation of Claflin School involved four organizational bodies: the Freedmen’s Bureau was to build and furnish the building; a local Claflin Board of Trustees was to purchase the land and provide governance; the Claflin Academy of Boston was to staff the school with "missionary" teachers; and the New England Freedmen’s Aid Association was to pay the salaries of the teachers. The Board of Trustees was overall in charge.

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) built Claflin School, which was one of about 50 such schools it built in Georgia. This organization was created by the Army Appropriations Act of July 13, 1866 (14 Stat. 90). It was enabled to support not only the education of the freedmen, but their other needs as well. Another Act (14 Stat. 173) required the Bureau to work with benevolent groups and to lease buildings to associations which supplied teachers.¹

The New England Freedman’s Aid Association was one of many Northern philanthropic organizations formed after the Civil War for the purpose of helping Blacks in the South. It was one of the largest of these organizations and had chapters throughout the North. It paid the salaries the Claflin School teachers. It was affiliated with the Methodist Church and the teachers it supported were often referred to as missionary teachers. Teachers of the many schools supported by this organization were required to

submit regular correspondence reports, and it is through the Claflin School principal's archived correspondence that we know much about the early operation of Claflin School.

The Claflin Academy of Boston supplied the teachers for Claflin School. This organization trained and vetted the teachers. This may have been an action that was required many times, depending upon teacher turnover. It is known, however, that the Claflin School principal remained in place for the entire eight years that the Claflin Academy of Boston supported Claflin School. It is unknown whether or not it donated money or provided any other support.

The namesakes of Claflin School were Lee Claflin and William Claflin: a father and son who headed the Claflin Academy of Boston. Lee Claflin, the father, (1791-1871) was an abolitionist and businessman with a long history of supporting racial equality both before and after the Civil War. As owner and founder of one of the largest shoe factories in New England, he was financially able to donate generously from the 1840s to the 1860s, giving an estimated total of $500,000. He primarily contributed to educational causes, including about a dozen schools and universities. Notably, he was a great financial supporter of Wilberforce University of Ohio, the nation's oldest Black college. He also helped found a black college: Claflin University in Spartanburg, S.C.

William Claflin (1818 -1905) was a son of Lee Claflin. Like his father, he was a successful businessman and ardent abolitionist. While temporarily living in Missouri he purchased a slave couple and immediately set them free. He was also an important political figure. He entered politics held numerous state offices, eventually helping to found the Republican Party in 1854. He was part of the nominating committee to bring his friend Abraham Lincoln to head the party. He became Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts in 1865 and governor in 1869. He was Lieutenant Governor when he and his father founded Claflin School in 1868.

The Claflin School Board of Trustees was a board of 5 local and prominent businessmen who were Unionists during the War. Importantly, they were committed to the betterment of the Freedmen. The chairman of the board was Randall Lawler Mott, a wealthy Columbusite who made his fortune from various important local enterprises, one of which was his cotton plantation across the river in Alabama.

The Real Estate

On September 21, 1868, the Trustees purchased a standard sized lot in the northeastern corner of town. The square shape of the Claflin lot derived from how the original plan for Columbus laid out its street network and lots in an accurately surveyed and orderly grid. The city blocks measured 300’ x 600’, which was divided into eight lots of roughly the same size. The Claflin lot was the four lots which composed the northern half of the block. The seller of the property was a Columbus banker named Henry H. Epling, who probably held the land for investment purposes. The purchase price was $1000,
which was paid by the Claflin School Board of Trustees. The land purchase was only half of the real
estate deal because in this arrangement there would be two separate titles: one for the land, which
would be held by the Trustees; and the other for the building, which would be held by the Freedmen’s
Bureau.

The Claflin lot bordered on 5th Avenue to the west, 6th Avenue to the east, 16th Street to the north
and 15th Street to the south. To the south of the Claflin half-block was a Black church and a few
residences. Adjacent blocks had few or no buildings. The reason for selection of that particular lot is
not explained in any known document, but doubtlessly had much to do with its close proximity to the
Black residential area, which extended from around 16th Street in the north, to the southern extent of
town. The central road of this area was 5th Avenue. Claflin was located at the northern end of this area,
between 5th Avenue and 6th Avenue. This location was important to how the school continued to serve
the black community so well for so long.

**The Original Building.**

The original Claflin School building was a 4-classroom building built in 1868, shortly after the land
was purchased in that same year. The date of construction is not known, but it is known that the school
principal reported to be working in the building in 1868. The dimensions of the building can be closely
estimated at about 51’ in width) x 28’ in depth (see illustration of building size). The Trustees retained
title to the land while the Freedmen’s Bureau retained title to the building it built.

The building form was of the type known as the “I-House”, or, “Plantation Plain”, being rectangular
in shape and symmetrical in massing, with two classrooms upstairs and two downstairs. The chimneys
of the sides were essential to the “I-House” type but the Claflin building had its chimneys on the interior,
which was less common than the exterior chimneys usually associated with the I-House type. The
building was heated by wood stoves in its four classrooms and this would remain until at least the 1920s,
as seen in its 1920s Sanborn map with annotation, “Heat: stoves”. It existed as a 4-classroom building
from 1868 until it was added onto to double its size in 1904.

The school’s most distinctive feature was its enclosed portico is on the front (south) of the building.
This was a proper building and one of the best school buildings in Columbus at the time.

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4 A. Ruger, *Bird’s Eye View of Columbus, Georgia, Looking North East, 1872* [map] (St. Louis, MO: A. Ruger,
1872; reprinted by Historic Columbus Foundation, 1978).
5 Victoria Huntzinger, "The Birth of Southern Public Education: Columbus, GA 1864-1904" (PhD diss., Harvard
University, 1992), 116.
6 “Public Schools,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, July 9, 1880, 4.
7 "School Types in Georgia," Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, accessed
in this article)
9 Huntzinger, 122.
1872. The original Claflin school building and lot shown here. The bridge seen above was aligned within the street grid. The gravestones of Linwood Cemetery are seen on the far side of the railroad tracks. 1872 Birds Eye View, Published by A. Ruger, St. Louis. Found in Genealogical Room, Columbus Public Library.
1886 Columbus, GA bird’s eye image with enlarged inset. Note the bridge of Linwood Boulevard had been shifted off the street grid between 1872 and 1886. The 5-sided portico is evident but the door faced what appears to be a cleared area. Found in Genealogical Room, Columbus Public Library.
The three images of the original 4-room Claflin School. Its most distinctive feature was the 5-sided portico, which probably evolved from a common rectangular portico. (compare with the 1872 and 1886 drawings at top) Front door on side of portico faced east to 6th Avenue. Photo courtesy Columbus Black History Museum. Photo date is unknown.
The Original Teachers and Students

The teachers and principal of Claflin School were provided by the Claflin Academy of Boston. Ms. Caroline Alfred of Massachusetts was the school’s first principal. She was about age 35 when she began there in 1868 at the school’s opening.\(^{10}\) She served in that capacity throughout the eight years that Claflin Academy operated the school: 1868 – 1876. The four teachers recorded in the June 1870 census were: Mary A. Fowler, age 31, born in Massachusetts; Harriett Freeman, age 32, born in Maine; Anna D. Holmes, age 23, born in Louisiana; and Anna L. Marrion, age 30, born in Massachusetts. For the Claflin Academy of Boston and other such sponsoring organizations, sending Northern teachers to Southern schools was considered missionary schooling.\(^{11}\) The Claflin teachers were enthusiastic about their mission and had the greatest respect for their students, especially as they struggled through the anti-freedmen backlash of the 1870s. Ms. Alfred wrote to her Claflin Academy superiors in 1875 that, “. . . the interest in the school among the colored people seems greater than I have ever known it.”\(^{12}\) The measure of success of the freedmen taught by the northern missionary teachers cannot be obtained from grades, because no grades are known to exist. But it should be assumed they did well, based on the confidence shown by those teachers. Two of their adult students were recognized by the school district and were given positions as school principals.

Most of what is known of the early years of Claflin School comes from the letters of its principal, Caroline Alfred to her superiors in the New England Freedmen’s Aid Association. The students were former slaves with no education, and their most critical subject to learn was “reading”. Other subjects included writing and arithmetic. Their ages ranged from child to adult. They were enthusiastic to learn and the Claflin teachers had the greatest confidence in them to do so.

Transition from Private Control to Columbus School District

The Freedmen’s Bureau withdrew from Georgia in 1870, so it transferred the building title to the Trustees on November 22nd, 1870, under the legally binding condition that it was to be used perpetually for educational purposes only.\(^{13}\) The loss to the school was in maintenance of the building, which the Freedmen’s Bureau would no longer be around to do. Other than this, the school continued to operate as normal with its three remaining organizations.

The Claflin teachers were dependant on the New England Freedmen’s Aid Association for their salaries, so when the Aid Society’s support began to lessen in the mid 1870s, the teachers feared they would have to leave before the local school system was prepared to take their place. They knew, however, their role was temporary and that it was an inevitability that Claflin would go to the public

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\(^{11}\) Huntzinger, 122.

\(^{12}\) Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People* (Chapel Hill: University of NC Press, 2010), 5.

school system at some point. This pending transfer was a constant irritant to the Claflin teachers because they felt the southern teachers and the school system were not close to being ready. An example of their disdain for the public school system is seen in an 1876 letter Ms. Alfred wrote to one of her superiors at the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. She quoted what she had heard one of her teachers tell a visitor: "... we had no school board and were in no way mixed up with this public school system - that was the secret of our success."\textsuperscript{14}

The School district began asking for the school to be turned over to them around 1873, but to the relief of the Claflin teachers, the Claflin Board of Trustees felt as the teachers did, and firmly resisted these efforts. They insisted the students were better served by northern missionary teachers than those of the Columbus public school system because they had more education.

The New England Freedmen's Association began reducing support around 1873, finally ending it completely in June 1876. The Claflin teachers were forced to close the school at that time and return north. As they left, they gave all their teaching supplies to their best students in hopes they would become teachers, saying these Claflin students knew the material better than the school district teachers.\textsuperscript{15}

Between June 1876 and July 1880, the Claflin Trustees were the sole remaining group of the four which had formed Claflin School, but with no teachers and no funding, all they could do was hope that another northern philanthropic missionary organization would sponsor more northern teachers. Meanwhile the building sat empty. In May 1879, the Trustees finally allowed the school system to temporarily use the building. The following year, on July 8, 1880, the Claflin Trustees consented to the inevitable and donated the facility to the City of Columbus.\textsuperscript{16} Importantly, the deed transaction carried the same requirement as it did when transferred to the Trustees in 1870: that it must always be used for educational purposes. The school district immediately appointed a highly capable, locally educated black professor named William Henry Spencer to be Claflin School's first principal under the Columbus school system.\textsuperscript{17} He would serve quite ably for eight years. As of the date of this writing, the restrictive condition of this deed remains legally binding and still challenges adaptive reuse of the facility.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{14} Huntzinger, 121.
\textsuperscript{15} Huntzinger, 116, 123.
\textsuperscript{16} Huntzinger, 125.
\textsuperscript{17} Huntzinger, 124.
\textsuperscript{18} Pound.
East side of the Claflin original building, as it appeared in 1948. Note the same tree by the building in both photos. Photo: Columbus State University Archives, Clafinite 1948.

Original Claflin School building with its 1904 addition. Size determined from comparison with adjacent buildings. Roof crests and valleys show the shapes of the original 1868 section of the building and its 1904 expansion. Measurements include roof eaves and wall thickness, so interior dimensions are two feet less per side. Aerial photo between 1948 and 1958. Photo: Linwood Cemetery archives.
The 1904 Building and Street Changes

The 1880s saw a surge in Columbus’s public school attendance in both the black and white schools, but throughout the 1880s and 1890s Columbus made little progress in either the building of new facilities or the expanding of existing ones. In 1904, after numerous meetings with black residents, the School Board finally resolved to expand the Claflin building from four classrooms to eight. The size of the 8-classroom building can be estimated at about 51’ width x 28’ depth (see illustration on page 27). Although this building is no longer extant, its placement on the lot would later affect the placement of both the 1921 and 1948 buildings because they were sited with regard to this building.

A property border change in 1904 reshaped the Claflin lot dramatically. It was caused by adding a street through the city block; and necessitated by the City’s need to improve traffic flow from the Cemetery Bridge to the north. The *Columbus Daily Enquirer* described how horse drawn wagons had difficulty stopping it the "T" at 6th Avenue after descending westward down the bridge. (see illustration at page 23, bottom) The extension of Linwood Boulevard through the Claflin property allowed traffic to continue without stopping. The result was the transfer of a 50’ wide strip of land on Claflin’s southern border and the creation of the western extension of Linwood Boulevard (originally called 16th Street at this location). Another street change gave the portion of 6th Avenue, north of Linwood Boulevard to the school for a parking lot. The angled railroad track and the curving Linwood Boulevard changed the square, grid-conforming shape of the Claflin lot into something resembling a triangle. The point of the triangle was the bridge where Linwood Boulevard crossed the railroad tracts. Part of the Claflin lot in the northern section had been low, swampy ground, but the City filled it to create a play area from its swampy condition. One newspaper enthusiastically said, "With the opening of the new street at that point, the filling in of the lot, and the remodeling of the building, this will be a handsome piece of school property."19 The lot presently retains these border changes. It should be noted here that local folklore says that the Claflin lot had a natural spring, from which passers-by would stop for water. The spring no

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longer exists and its location is unknown, but its most likely location may have been in the north side swampy ground the City filled in 1904.

Clafin School was by then well established as an anchor in the local black community and would continue as such, as it served black students for a century. It was always a community school. Students traveled to school on bikes or by walking. There was no bussing to this school.

**The 1921 Building**

By 1920 Clafin School was once again experiencing overcrowded conditions, as was the rest of the school district. The School Board allocated generous funds to end the overcrowded situation in several areas of town, including the area where Clafin School stood. This would add a new building to the Clafin school property. The building would be equally centered between the roads to the north, south, and east; and the original building to the west. The School Board decided to build aesthetically pleasing, high quality schools of the same innovative style as the one it built in 1919: Waverly Terrace School. The style chosen was what they called the, “California Style”, which is now known as the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The forerunner of this style in Columbus was Waverly Terrace School and a newspaper account at the time declared it to be the first school of the five major cities in Georgia to be built of this style. Columbus school planners chose this style because it was endorsed by school superintendent, Roland. B. Daniel, who had recently arrived from California. Of the three new schools built in 1921, two would be white and one would be black. The School Board hired some of the best local architects to design these three buildings, and the one chosen for Clafin was a prominent Columbus architect named Frederick Roy Duncan.  

His prior experience included designing switchboards for the locks of the Panama Canal; the roof garden on the only black theater in Columbus; and many high-end homes and businesses in Columbus.

The new Clafin building cost approximately $30,000 and was stocked with $2000 worth of equipment.

The Spanish Colonial Revival Style was modified greatly for the 1921 Clafin School building. Characteristics of this style usually include parapet walls, which Clafin has; rearward projecting wings forming a courtyard, which Clafin also has; and an exterior finish of stucco, which Clafin does not have. It is the unexplained omission of stucco that is odd for this architectural style and the reason for its omission is not stated in any known source. One local newspaper took notice and gave it a guardedly complimentary description as, “. . . not unattractive . . .” This puzzling omission raises questions about its purpose. Possible reasons include: a cost-saving measure; a time-saving measure; or a means of giving a black school a different appearance.

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20 “Public Schools", 26.
22 “Columbus School Property is Valued in Report," *Columbus Ledger Enquirer*, August 8, 1921, 7.
23 "Columbus Public Schools Are Reopening” *Columbus Ledger Enquirer*, September 18, 1921, 26.
Sanborn Fire Insurance map from 1929. The 1868 / 1904 original building is shown in the south center of the lot. The 1921 building is to the right. The caretaker’s house is circled but made barely visible when the map was updated. The original school outhouse seen immediately north of the school. Original school labeled, “Heat: Stoves, No Lights” showing it still retained its original type heating and lacked electricity as late as 1929. Sanborn Map Collection, CSU Archives.

The corner of Linwood Boulevard and 6th Avenue. This oblique view of the 1921 Claflin School building was the only way the building could be seen from the street because a frontal view was only possible from its parking lot at right of the photo. Photo date in 1930s. The original Claflin building is visible in background. Photo from Columbus on the Chattahoochee by Etta Worsley (Columbus, GA: Columbus Office Supply, 1953).
The 1921 Claflin school building opened on Sep 19, 1921, which was opening day for all public schools in Columbus. Claflin and the other two new schools opened with much positive newspaper coverage. Prominent citizens toured the buildings and praised them for their innovative, low-profile, U-shaped arrangement.²⁴ Mr. George Foster Peabody, the Columbus-born and nationally recognized advocate for black education, praised the Claflin building as being as good as any white elementary school in the city. Mr. James A. Martin, the Rosenwald schools field inspector for the state of Georgia, inspected the school soon after opening day and described it in a newspaper interview, as the most modern black elementary school in the five major cities of Georgia. He explained the reason for building such a high-quality facility was that Columbus had a progressive educational system for its black citizens. In glowing terms, Mr. Martin enthusiastically held up the city's educational system as an example that should be followed statewide. He then proposed that educators from elsewhere in Georgia visit Columbus to view its school system.²⁵ Claflin School thus consisted of two buildings; the original wood-sided building of 1868 / 1904, and the brick-tile building of 1921. Each building contained eight classrooms. In 1921 Claflin School taught kindergarten and grades one through four and the earliest grades were housed in the newer building.²⁶ Years later grades five through seven would be added. It would not be until around 1950 that the eighth grade would be added.

²⁴ "Columbus Public Schools Are Reopening," 26.
²⁵ "Vastly Interested In Education Here," Columbus Daily Enquirer, June 10, 1921, 1.
²⁶ "Columbus Public Schools Are Reopening," 26.
Claflin students and teacher pose at the front entrance of the 1921 building for a class picture. Note you can see directly through the building to the open court beyond. Date probably 1920s.

The 1921 Claflin building in 2014. The appearance remains the same except for a 4’ reduction in exterior wall height and boarded up windows. Photo taken from bridge over the rail road tracks. Photo by author.
The 1948 Building

By 1946 the Claflin student population exceeded the capacity for the two buildings and the school board began plans to add another building to the site. They chose the architectural team of James Joseph Walton Biggers Jr. and Thomas Firth Lockwood Jr. James Biggers and T. Firth Lockwood, as they were called, were accomplished Columbus architects with previous experience working in the school system.27 School district superintendent, Dr. William H. Shaw, took personal interest in the new building for the Claflin site, and guided the architectural team to design it to a high level of quality.28 The architectural style chosen was the International Style, a style which was introduced to the US in 1932 and quickly dominated the post-war commercial building industry. The boxlike style was a statement of modernity and efficiency, which omitted ornamental features to make a statement of departure from tradition. Because the style came to be associated with cities, schoolhouses of this type were defined as the “Urban School” type, by the Georgia Historic Preservation Division.29 This large, modern facility with 16 classrooms doubled the number of classrooms of the two previous buildings. Because it was not intended to replace either of the two buildings, it was labeled, “Addition to Claflin School”, on its architectural plans.30 Despite the stylistic differences, Claflin School’s designers made it compliment the 1921 building by designing it in a similar “U-shaped” form with its rear wings forming a three-sided

27 Katherine H. Mahan and William C. Woodall, A History of Public Education in Muscogee County and the City of Columbus Georgia 1828-1976 (Columbus, GA: Muscogee County School District, 1977), 246.
28 Claflinite, 1948, 1
29 “School Types in Georgia.”
courtyard. Only about 15 feet separated the two buildings, and those gaps were secured by expanding steel gates.

One consideration during the planning phase was how to save the original Freedmen’s school Claflin building, because it sat on the spot where the 1948 building needed to be. They saved the beloved building by moving it to the unused northwest corner of the lot, where its eight classrooms would remain in use. (see illustration below)31

Outlines of the 1921 building (right); original building (faint rectangle in lower center); and planned 1948 building (left). Arrow and bold rectangle was added to show where original was moved. From Claflin School Construction Plan, Sheet 1, October 1947. From MCSD Archive

All three buildings were present between 1948 and 1958. Shotgun houses once filled entire blocks. Photo from Linwood Cemetery Archives.

The new building opened on October 14, 1948: about two months into the school year. It was two stories tall and clearly dominated the site. The school now faced 5th Avenue to the west instead of 6th Avenue to the east and changed its street address from its 6th Avenue address to 1530 5th Avenue. The 1948 building was more modern in every way. In addition to its 16 classrooms, it contained two kindergarten classrooms; a large auditorium which doubled as a cafeteria; and a dedicated library. Floors were concrete and walls were masonry with hallways having the lower 5' in brick. The auditorium contained a stage with elaborate plaster surround. When combined with the 8 classrooms of the 1921 building and 8 classrooms of the 1868/1904 building, the entire complex contained 32 classrooms. It easily handled the 917 students enrolled in its opening year. In 1948 the school started a school newspaper called, "The Claflinite" which showed the many ways in which the new building was appreciated, such as with plays and ceremonies in the new auditorium, and other wholesome, school activities. Until 1948, Claflin School only went up to the 7th Grade, but the 8th grade was added in 1950.

33 Claflinite, 1948-1951.
End of the Original Building

From 1948 to 1958 the three buildings of Claflin School stood together. That changed on November 2nd, 1958 at 2:00 AM, when a fire broke out at the original school building. The fire department extinguished the fire before it consumed the whole building, but the damage was still considerable. The School District fire inspector could only speculate about what may have caused the fire, saying it was most likely an act of arson. He cited evidence that it started near an outside corner where no combustible materials existed. The school board deliberated about what to do about this, and took into consideration the building's historic importance and sentimental value. It also considered the economic issues: The building was insured for $10,000, but the damage was estimated to be $18,000. This $8000 deficit weighed heavily against saving the building, as did the fact that at the time of the fire the building had not been in use except for storage and classrooms for adult education classes. Economic issues ultimately determined its fate and the school board voted to demolish it.34

34 "City Firemen Probe Blaze at School," Columbus Enquirer, November 2, 1958, 2.
Ms. Lillie Pickett’s classroom, shown here, was on the first floor and immediately south of the foyer of the 1948 building. This is the only known interior historic photo of Claflin School, taken probably in the 1950s. Ms. Pickett taught at Claflin School for over two decades.

Ms. Lillie Pickett’s classroom in 2014. It is now one of the most deteriorated rooms in the school. The door on the left is the one seen in the historic photo above. Photo by author.
**1960s to Present**

School integration began in Columbus in 1967 and Claflin School integrated around 1970, although few white students ever went there.\(^{35}\) Its last use as a school was at the end of the 1972-73 school year. At this point its name was changed to the “Claflin Instructional Center” to coincide with its new use as administrative offices with a few adult education classes. Its uses included the centralized library/media processing services for all the public schools;\(^{36}\) a benefits office; school director’s offices; adult education such as English as a Second Language; school consultants’ offices; etc.\(^{37}\) It should be noted that Claflin’s proximity to the local black community made it an anchor throughout its century of use as a school. It served many generations of black students of the central part of Columbus, who mostly traveled to school on bikes or by walking. There was no bussing to this school.

At some point during this time the school district desired to sell Claflin Center, but was thwarted by the restrictive deed covenant of 1880, which restricted its use to “educational purposes”.\(^{38}\) The School Board hired a law office in September 1988, to reexamine the deed requirements.\(^{39}\) The law office then made the determination that the deed restrictions still applied, which allowed the School Board to continue to either use it for, “educational purposes”, or turn it over to the City. Failing in its attempt to sell the property, the school district continued to use the Claflin Instructional Center.

In 2005 the School District obtained new facilities and moved all operations from the Claflin buildings, so it had the Claflin buildings boarded up for mothballing. Unfortunately it failed to incorporate an effective security system and also failed to maintain the integrity of the roof. Claflin fell victim to vandalism, theft and deterioration. The damage is estimated to be about 11 million dollars.\(^{40}\) In 2012, the School Board decided to sell the property to the City of Columbus for a nominal amount because it was clear it could not sell the property, especially with the education restriction of the deed still in effect. It gave a Notice of Abandonment on November 19, 2012.\(^{41}\) The City passed a resolution in December 2012 to accept the property. In August, 2014 the City officially transferred the deed and formally became owner of the property.

At the time of this writing, the City of Columbus hopes to see the Claflin buildings restored and used by some responsible party. It is considering having the deed restriction lifted by the Federal government, although this is not the preferred option. Concerned citizens formed an advocacy organization called, “Friends of Historic Claflin and Alumni Association” to create a viable plan for the school’s restoration and use. Although many are hopeful, Claflin’s future is far from certain.

\(^{35}\) Interview, Larry Ware, by Edward Howard. Informal interview. October, 2014.
\(^{36}\) Interview, Callie McGinnis, by Edward Howard. Informal Interview, October, 2014.
\(^{38}\) Pound, William C. 1.
\(^{39}\) Ibid.
\(^{40}\) Sam Andras, Opinion of Probable Construction Cost, Columbus, GA, Oct 15, 2014.
\(^{41}\) Deed Book 2012, 170, Found in Records and Deeds Room, Muscogee (GA) County Courthouse.
Muscogee County Death Index
August 1890 – December 1918
Compiled December 10, 2001

Names Beginning with A - Bi

By Daniel B. Olds

Information extracted from the Death Register on file at Vital Records Section, Muscogee County Health Department, Columbus, Georgia pertains only to deaths that were reported and recorded.

Sequence of data from Left to Right:
- Last Name of Deceased.
- First Name or Initial of Deceased.
- Sex of Deceased.
- Race of Deceased.
- Age at Death.
- Date Death Reported.
- Remarks.

Example 1: Abercrombie,?,F,C,0,26,June,1892.Inf of Katie Abercrombie, First name unknown, was female, colored, who died at birth and whose death was reported on 26 June 1892. Katie Abercrombie was the mother of the deceased (A zero for Age at Death means died at birth).

Example 2: Adams,Codie,F,W,30,13,September,1908.Mrs. Adams, Codie was female, white, who died at age 30 and whose death was reported on 13 September 1908. She was Mrs. Codie Adams.

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Abbott,Charles,M,W,10,1,August,1900.
Abbott,M,M,C,1,19,November,1890.
Abercrombie,?,F,C,0,26,June,1892.Inf of Katie
Abercrombie,?,M,C,1,20,May,1898.Inf of Katie
Abercrombie,?,M,C,5,30,August,1898.Inf of Kate
Abercrombie,?,M,C,0,27,April,1899.Inf of Kate
Abercrombie,?,M,C,0,5,June,1905.Inf of Kate
Abercrombie,Emma,F,C,10,19,October,1914.
Abercrombie,Hattie,F,C,30,9,March,1903.
Abercrombie,Henry,M,W,70,11,October,1914.
Abercrombie,Isabell,F,W,20,9,October,1905.
Abercrombie,Kate,F,C,5,6,July,1902.
Abercrombie,Mittie,F,C,70,4,December,1913.
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Babbett, Frank, M, W, 60, 1, April, 1907.
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