



Reflections

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FARMING IN SOUTHWEST GEORGIA SINCE 1883: THE KENTAVIA WILLIAMS FARM

*Jeanne Cyriaque, African American Programs Coordinator
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Centennial Family Farm awards were presented to 26 families at the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter in October 2013. These families whose farms exist in 25 Georgia counties have maintained their farms for at least 100 years to qualify for this recognition. Since the program began in 1993, over 450 farms across Georgia have received the prestigious awards. Celebrating the program's 20th year, Gary W. Black, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Agriculture and Homer Bryson, Deputy Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, presented each farm with certificates recognizing their achievement that were signed by Governor Nathan Deal. The Kentavia Williams Farm of Thomasville was among this year's awardees, and became the eleventh African American farm to receive this honor since the program began.

The Williams Family Farm began when Charles Cockrell purchased 245 acres of land in November 1883. He started the family legacy in farming that his descendants have continued for 130 years. Cockrell was born in Virginia around 1840, and started a family farm growing cotton, corn, sugar cane and potatoes. While he was separated from his wife, Cockrell raised two daughters, Ada and Clara. Both daughters married and started their own families.

Cockrell died in 1892 when he was struck by a train near Boston, Georgia. The *Daily Times Enterprise* reported in his obituary that he was a member of "the colored masonic lodge" in Thomasville, and he "was honored with one of the

largest attended colored funeral ever seen in that section." His two daughters were his only children, and inherited his estate and 245 acres of land that was divided equally among them.

Clara Cockrell, who married Crawford (Cossie) Williams, had three children. When she died in 1907, her sister Ada Cockrell and her husband Howell Anthony took them in along with their seven children and cared for them until they were married. Kenneth Williams, one of Clara's sons, married Octavia Wilson in 1914, and this couple continued the family legacy with ten children. Kenneth also continued the family farm, and purchased the 122.5 acres from



Cows graze in abundant pastures on the Kentavia Williams Farm.

Photo by Charlie Miller

his aunt Ada's estate in 1950. He also purchased land from his sisters and, by 1962, owned the family farm with the 245 acres his grandfather Cockrell had purchased in 1883.

Kenneth Williams continued farming with a variety of crops. He planted corn, peanuts, cotton, potatoes, cabbage, watermelon, tobacco, soybeans and fruit trees. Additionally, he raised hogs, cows and chickens. Kenneth Williams sold the milk produced by his cows to the dairy in Thomasville.

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The Kentavia Williams farm is an African American Centennial Farm located near Thomasville. It is the eleventh African-American farm to receive recognition for continuous farming in the same family for 100 years or more.
Photo by Charlie Miller

FARMING IN SOUTHWEST GEORGIA SINCE 1883: THE KENTAVIA WILLIAMS FARM

Jeanne Cyriaque, continued from page 1

When Kenneth Williams died in 1967, he was buried in the Summerhill Cemetery in Boston with his grandfather, Charles Cockrell. His descendants, who had grown up farming, decided to continue his legacy by incorporating the family farm. The Kentavia Williams Farm was named by combining the letters of their ancestors' first names, Kenneth and Octavia.



*Feeding the cows is a daily chore on the Kentavia Williams Farm.
Photo by Charlie Miller*

Kenneth Williams' descendants continued this Centennial Family Farm by producing these major crops: cotton, peanuts, corn and soybeans. The farm also has pecan trees today. They no longer have as many chickens, but 20-30 cows are abundant, grazing in the pastures on the farm today. Other crops they no longer grow are sweet potatoes and sugar cane. As Kenneth's male children, Carlie, Walter, and Carey have aged, Walter's grandson Bryan Williams manages farm operations today. About 50 percent of the farm's 245 acres are currently devoted to farming.



*Bryan Williams manages the farm.
Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*



*The tobacco barn still stands and is repurposed today.
Photo by Charlie Miller*

The original farm house that was built in 1916 still remains today, but with important modern amenities like air conditioning and indoor bathrooms. Most of the historic outbuildings on the farm are gone, but the old tobacco barn still exists, though they stopped producing tobacco. The Williams family has lots of descendants today, so they built an enclosed pavilion with a large kitchen and seating area for family reunions, which are always held at the old homestead.



*Descendants of Kenneth and Octavia Williams celebrate their Centennial Family Farm Award.
Photo by Charlie Miller*

Belle Williams lives on the family farm with her brothers. She attended Douglass High School in Thomasville. When she heard about the Centennial Family Farm Awards by reading about it in the *Thomasville Times-Enterprise*, she immediately recognized that "our farm is well over 100 years old" and she went to work on the application for this year's awards. Belle also is a major family advocate, and she made certain that at least 30 descendants attended the award ceremony, ensuring the Kentavia Williams Family Farm will continue to be a major agricultural producer in Thomas County for years to come.



*Rows of corn can be seen during harvest time on the Kentavia Williams Farm.
Photo by Charlie Miller*

The Georgia Centennial Farm Program is administered through a partnership including the Historic Preservation Division. For more information on the program, visit our website georgiacentennialfarms.org. The chair is Charlie Miller at charlie.miller@dnr.state.ga.us or 404-651-5287. The application deadline is May 1st each year.

JACK HADLEY RECEIVES CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS VETERANS BRAINTRUST AWARD

*Jeanne Cyriaque, African American Programs Coordinator
Historic Preservation Division*

James “Jack” Hadley, a native of Thomasville, was honored by the Congressional Black Caucus with a Veterans Braintrust Award at a special ceremony in Washington, DC on September 20th. This award program recognizes veterans who provide exemplary services in their communities. The Braintrust is co-chaired by U.S. Representatives Sanford Bishop (Georgia) and Corrine Brown (Florida).



From left to right following the Veterans Braintrust Award ceremony, U.S. Representative Corrine Brown (Florida) James “Jack” Hadley, Christine J. Hadley, Jackie Hadley Artybridge, Cathy Hadley Wilson and Eugene Wilson celebrate his award.

Jack Hadley served 28 years in the United States Air Force. When he retired from military service in 1984, he returned to Thomasville. Jack worked for the United States Postal Service as a letter carrier until 1997, when he retired again. Hadley always had a passion for black history, and began collecting artifacts while he was stationed in Wiesbaden, Germany. He credits his son Jim as the stimulus for his collection because while Jim was attending the Department of Defense high school, he told his dad that the school had no interest in Black History Week. Hadley viewed that as a challenge, and he helped Jim on his first black history collection that was assembled from issues of *Ebony*, *Essence* and *Jet* magazines. Hadley’s collection continued to grow and his exhibits were regularly displayed at the various bases where he was stationed during his military career.

By the time Hadley returned to Thomasville, his collection became the impetus for his quest to establish the Jack Hadley Black History Museum. He developed a *Black Heritage Trail Tour Guide* of 68 sites in Thomasville, and began *Step On, Step Off* tours for family reunions and special events, like the tour he conducted during the 2005 state preservation conference. He co-authored with historian Titus Brown *African American Life on the Southern Hunting Plantation* based upon his family and other employees who worked at Pebble Hill or other hunting plantations and the Thomas County Museum of History hosted the exhibit. Hadley’s collection also includes exhibits on Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper, the first African American to graduate from West Point, and other military heroes.

The Jack Hadley Black History Museum received a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to catalogue its collection of 4,500 artifacts. Additionally, staff and board members



The Jack Hadley Black History Museum opened in 2006. Its collection adds an important resource to the Thomasville community.

have participated in museum conferences and professional development workshops and an internship program was established with Florida A&M University to train the next generation of museum curators.

As Jack Hadley’s collection grew he did not have to look far for the future home of the Jack Hadley Black History Museum that opened in 2006. The museum is located in a renovated, brick building on the campus of the Frederick Douglass High School that he attended. The Douglass High School Alumni Association presently owns the complex in the Dewey City Historic District,



The Jack Hadley Black History Museum (left) lies adjacent to one of the buildings on the Douglass High School complex. Douglass was one of Georgia’s equalization schools.

and the museum’s collections are now curated in a 5,617 sq. ft. building that is a regular stop for area schools, scholars and tourists. The museum is open from 10-5, Tuesday through Saturday. Visit www.jackhadleyblackhistorymuseum.com for more information. Jack Hadley is a past recipient of the Governor’s Awards in the Humanities in Georgia, and the museum was featured in the *Thomasville Scene* magazine. ■

AUGUSTA'S 2013 THIS PLACE MATTERS: BELAIR HILLS ESTATES

*Danielle Ross, African American Programs Assistant
Historic Preservation Division*

In a collaboration between Historic Augusta, the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History, and the Belair Hills Estates Neighborhood Association, the 2013 “This Place Matters: Preserving Augusta’s African American Communities” event featured Belair Hills Estates. “This Place Matters: Preserving African American Communities” was established three years ago as an annual event to promote the preservation of African-American neighborhoods and increase awareness, while finding solutions to preservation issues. The featured site, Belair Hills Estates, is located west of I-520 just outside of downtown Augusta. The event was held on Friday, June 28 and Saturday, June 29-2013. The kickoff took place at Christian City of Praise, just east of the locally recognized district, with a presentation by Alex Thomas. He serves as a Vice-Chair of the National Trust for Historic Preservation Board of Advisors. As a native of Natchez, Mississippi and former director of the Mississippi Blues Heritage Trail, Thomas outlined how oral history along with the preservation of place should be documented for our future generations. Thomas presented several stories on this process of gathering and listening to the oral histories of blues singers across the state of Mississippi and how it further motivated him to take action in protecting this legacy.



From left to right: Marion Griffin (resident), Rev. Kenneth Gainous, Jeanne Cyriaque, Alex Thomas, Christine Miller-Betts (Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History), Erick Montgomery and Robyn Anderson (Historic Augusta) at the kickoff event at Christian City of Praise.

Photo courtesy of Historic Augusta

On Saturday attendees participated in a ramble of homes, many of which are historic ranch homes. Many ranch homes across the state of Georgia have reached the 50-year threshold for possible listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Common characteristics of the ranch-style home are a long footprint, single-story silhouette, carports, and screened porches. Between 1940 and 1960, over 175,000 ranch homes were built in the state of Georgia alone. There are a great number of architectural subtypes within the broad category of the ranch-style, and Belair Hills Estates

has several of the subtypes present in the community. One such house was the home of Leo and Lois Jackson, built in 1965. The Jackson home is a linear ranch subtype, with slight projections and recessed elements. A carport extends to one end of the house while a sunroom to the rear of the house served as a later addition. The exterior of the home is brick with vertical wood board accents. The home is still set in a linear form with an addition for extra space built to the rear of the house. The home of Mr. and Mrs. Jackson was the sixth home to be built in the community.



Leo and Lois Jackson greet the ramble participants in front of their ranch-style home.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Other homes seen while on the ramble in the community were split-level homes, also built in the mid-20th-century. Along with the ranch, this house type was very popular from 1950-1960. The split-level home is known for its staggered half-floor levels and effective construction in lowering what could be seen as a bulky two-story section. One common characteristic of the split-level was the contrasting exterior materials. Both brick and siding were used to contrast each other on both the single-story and two-story portions of the house. The home of Marion and Miriam Griffin is a great example of a split-level home with brick and siding on the exterior. The home was built in Belair Hills in 1963 with an addition on the rear and an attached garage.

In 1958, the land on which Belair Hills Estates currently sits was owned by two white developers, H.O. Padrick and Murray Lazarus. These developers offered lots for sale to African-American citizens, and Martrice M. Scott was one of the first to purchase a parcel. Scott ultimately assisted the developers with marketing and selling lots to other potential buyers. At that time, segregation was widespread and there were few places for African Americans to buy land or property in the city. In the midst of their development, Padrick and Lazarus decided to withdraw and remove themselves from the ownership of the property due to changes in their development plans. Seeing this situation as an opportunity to acquire land and make it available to African Americans, Martrice Scott formed



Belair Hills Estates also features split-level homes, like the home of Marion and Miriam Griffin. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Pioneers, Inc. and acquired the Belair Hills Estates property. Pioneers consisted of his wife, Mrs. Mamie E. Scott, Mr. Futhey Babcock, Mrs. Lola Gabriel, Mrs. Margaret Pickett, and Dr. William Graham.

Upon acquisition, many of the lots were under contract, with some buyers defaulting and other buyers were slow on their payments. In an effort to facilitate the purchase of property, Pioneers, Inc. worked out a contract where Padrick and Lazarus would be paid a financial lump sum, with the rest being paid in monthly installments. The process was as follows: buyers paid the Pioneers, who then paid Padrick and Lazarus, who then made a certain number of lots available. Along with managing payments and working to release lots, all of the Pioneers purchased ten lots each.



This photo of Martrice .M. Scott is from the archives of the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History.

Ultimately, Pioneers, Inc. was able to pay off Padrick and Lazarus and take over the finances for the development. With the newly found responsibility of managing the development, Pioneers

soon encountered financial challenges. Many buyers paid infrequently or fell behind. Despite the financial struggle, Pioneers did not foreclose and they paid the taxes for non-deeded and unsold lots. They also worked on getting paved roads, lights, and water for the development. The first home built by Pioneers, Inc. was the home of Mrs. Evelyn Screen on Flagler Road. Three more homes built around the same time belonging to Mr. & Mrs. James Powell, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Calhoun, and Mr. and Mrs. James Hills were financed by Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company. While Martrice M. Scott passed away in 1981, his community continued to flourish into what it is today.

THE ROLE OF PILGRIM HEALTH AND LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

Pilgrim Health and Life became an integral part of the Belair Hills Estates from its inception. Martrice M. Scott, head of Pioneers and founder of Belair Hills, Inc. served as Associate Agency Director and Board Chairman of Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company. This company served as one of the most successful black businesses started in Augusta.

Pilgrim was founded in 1898 by Solomon Walker, Thomas Walker, Walter Hornsby, James Collier, and Rev. Thomas Jefferson Hornsby. The basis for the creation of such a company was to provide insurance services to African Americans, from an African-American owned company. During this time many African Americans gave money to benevolent societies through their churches. The societies provided aid during an illness and paid for decent burials. During the first few years of running the company they experienced considerable growth until 1905, when the State of Georgia required all informal benevolent societies to pay an upfront fee of \$5,000 to protect policy holders. As a result, Pilgrim merged with smaller benevolent societies to ultimately pay the fee and incorporate under the title of Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company of Augusta.



Employees of Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company pose outside of the Augusta home office in 1970. Photo courtesy of the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History

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AUGUSTA'S 2013 THIS PLACE MATTERS: BELAIR HILLS ESTATES

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Over the next 18 years Pilgrim continued to grow and expand their offices and services. The company designed policies for working-class citizens that were issued in small amounts. There were branches of the company that operated in Macon, Savannah, and Atlanta. Between 1923 and 1951, Pilgrim was issuing policies in Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina, and received a license to operate in Florida.

As a result, in segregated Augusta, young African American men had a place where they could find a white collar job. For women, Pilgrim served as a place where there was opportunity to work as secretaries within the company's office operations. By 1948, over 700 black Augustans were employed by the insurance company, many of whom lived in Belair Hills Estates. One such gentleman, Leo Jackson, described to visitors of the "This Place Matters: Belair Hills Estates Ramble" his experiences working for the company and having a stable job at the luncheon in Scott Park.

During the 1950s and 1960s, civil rights and desegregation began to take its toll on the insurance company and Pilgrim began to lose market share. Desegregation led to more white-owned businesses offering their services and variety of products to African-American consumers. After failing to create a surplus with their funds, Pilgrim was declared "Financially Impaired" in 1989. This declaration led to the acquisition of Pilgrim by Atlanta Life Insurance Company in that same year.



Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company is a contributing resource in the Laney-Walker North Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 5, 1985.

Photo courtesy of New Georgia Encyclopedia

Two of the many buildings that Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company owned and operated still stand on Laney-Walker Boulevard down the street from Tabernacle Baptist Church today: the Pilgrim Health and Life Headquarters and the Civic Room. For more information on Belair Hills Estates please see *History of Belair Hills Estates* by Joan Scott Ruff. The Historic Preservation

Division (HPD) maintains files for researchers about Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company, as well as the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Laney-Walker North Historic District. Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company is a contributing resource in this historic district. A historic context on ranch homes is available online at the HPD website, www.georgiashpo.org. ■

PINEVALE HIGH SCHOOL REMEMBERS THE 1963 STATE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

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Historic Preservation Division*

Pinevale High School in Valdosta was one of nearly 500 equalization schools that were built during the 1950s-1960s when Georgia operated two racially separate school systems in response to the *Brown vs. Board* Supreme Court decision. Campuses of segregated schools in urban areas like Valdosta were common in communities with significant African-American population. These complexes included both an elementary and high school, athletic fields and, in some cases, gymnasiums and cafeterias that doubled as auditoriums. These schools became the center of the community, and sports teams exemplified this spirit.



A Pinevale High School tiger is engraved on this marker that lies on the walkway between the gymnasium and the Pinevale Learning Center. These walkways were common on equalization school campuses, and provided shelter for the students as they moved between buildings.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Many of these historic schools disappeared from the urban landscape once school integration came. Another outcome was loss of school sports history, as mascots, trophies and teams were merged with larger, predominately white schools. As the Valdosta City School District adapted to integration, some of the buildings on the old Pinevale High School campus were demolished for a modern elementary school, but the gymnasium and renamed Pinevale Learning Center survive today. Additionally, alumni of Pinevale hold reunions and community activities in the gymnasium.

When African American programs surveyed the school complex, they met with alumni in the Pinevale gymnasium to discuss their partnership with the school district, who maintains the facility. The gymnasium is in good condition with a new roof. The



The Valdosta City School District maintains the Pinevale gym that is still in use today. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

gymnasium floor is ideal for basketball games, has bleachers and is air conditioned. Alumni were encouraged to develop mentoring programs while continuing the gym’s primary use: recreation. Alumni were excited about an upcoming reunion, one that would commemorate how their football team won the 1963 state championship in the segregated A4-A Division.

The Pinevale Tigers football team had no easy route to the state championship in 1963, although they finished the 1962 season with a 7-3 record. When the season began, their team had 20 returning seniors and 18 juniors. The team’s camaraderie proved strong against their first opponent, Savannah’s Johnson High. It was a defensive game resulting in a 0-0 draw. The Pinevale team beat all opposing teams including Ralph Bunche in Woodbine, Monitor in Fitzgerald, Douglass in Thomasville and Carver in Douglas. Their next formidable opponent on the schedule in 1963 was Center High School in Waycross. The outcome of that game was also a tie, this time 7-7. When Pinevale met Center again in the regional playoffs, defense again prevailed. This time Pinevale won on a safety, 2-0. The Pinevale Tigers offense prevailed in subsequent shutouts to Douglass and Norris, culminating in the championship game against Lemon Street of Marietta. The Tigers defeated Lemon Street in a 27-13 championship win.

On September 5, 2013, alumni and former players from the 1963 Pinevale Tigers championship team transformed the gymnasium for their 50th anniversary banquet. The gym was decorated in school colors: orange and black. Donald “Butch” Williams, a member of the championship team, was the emcee for the evening.



Pinevale graduate Farrell Thompson sells caps to alumni as they enter the gym for the reunion banquet. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Coaches, players and trainers who were deceased were recognized throughout the evening. Entertainment was provided by a local young men’s singing group. Frank Wilson, one of the former coaches, provided reflections of the championship season. James Washington’s video presentation highlighted the team, former students and supporters.



Some of the players from the 1963 state championship team wore their team letters and jackets at the 50th anniversary banquet. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Charles C. Hall was Pinevale’s first principal. Principal Hall was recognized throughout the evening, and in his talk, he focused on what the team had accomplished while encouraging the alumni to develop programs for community youth where they as role models become their mentors.



Charles C. Hall, Pinevale High School’s first principal, discussed how the Pinevale Tigers alumni could mentor current students in the Valdosta community. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

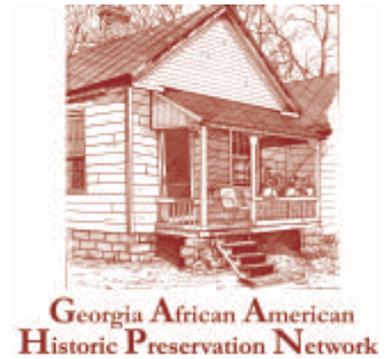
The Pinevale Tigers 1963 championship team were recognized during a pre-game ceremony at the Valdosta High School/Brooks County football game over the weekend, and subsequently were the cover story in the October 2013 South Georgia edition of *In The Game*, a high school sports magazine. While the 1963 championship was their only state title, the Pinevale Tigers continue their preservation of this legacy through their programs at the old gym in Valdosta.



Former 1963 champion Donald “Butch” Williams mentors young people at a program.

ABOUT REFLECTIONS

Since its first issue appeared in December 2000, *Reflections* has documented hundreds of Georgia's African American historic resources. Now all of these articles are available on the Historic Preservation Division website www.georgiashpo.org. Search for links to your topic by categories: cemeteries, churches, districts, farms, lodges, medical, people, places, schools, and theatres. You can now subscribe to *Reflections* from the homepage. *Reflections* is a recipient of a *Leadership in History Award* from the American Association for State and Local History



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ABOUT GAAHPN



The Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN) was established in January 1989. It is composed of representatives from neighborhood organizations and preservation groups. GAAHPN was formed in response to a growing interest in preserving the cultural and built diversity of Georgia's African American heritage. This interest has translated into a number of efforts which emphasize greater recognition of African American culture and contributions to Georgia's history. The GAAHPN Steering Committee plans and implements ways to develop programs that will foster heritage education, neighborhood revitalization, and support community and economic development.

The Network is an informal group of over 3,000 people who have an interest in preservation. Members are briefed on the status of current and planned projects and are encouraged to offer ideas, comments and suggestions. The meetings provide an opportunity to share and learn from the preservation experience of others and to receive technical information through workshops. Members receive a newsletter, *Reflections*, produced by the Network. Visit the Historic Preservation Division website at www.georgiashpo.org. Preservation information and previous issues of *Reflections* are available online. Membership in the Network is free and open to all.

Reflections

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