



Buckhead Heritage Society

NEWSLETTER, Winter 2015-2016

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Mission:

Buckhead Heritage strives to sustain the quality of life in Buckhead by identifying, preserving, and promoting its historic resources.

President's Letter



To say that 2015 has been an exciting year would be an understatement. Through the tireless efforts of our Board of Directors and esteemed Executive Director, Erica Danylchak, Buckhead Heritage has packed this past year with informative and entertaining programs, a celebrated fundraising event at the historic Pink Castle as well as taken a significant step forward in the implementation of the Buckhead StoryLines project (see page 5). Our interpretive plan book, which will guide the implementation of this project of innovative exhibits and signage at historical sites in Buckhead, won a national award (more on page 5). This will help move the needle in our efforts on the Buckhead StoryLines

project as we move forward in 2016. On the preservation front, your contributions allowed Buckhead Heritage to restore and repair vandalized headstones at Mt. Olive Cemetery at the entrance of Frankie Allen Park. We want to express our gratitude to you, our members, who make this all possible. We strive to earn your continued support and hope that we do so.

This upcoming year should prove to be an even more exciting year for Buckhead Heritage with informative programming, a truly unique scavenger hunt (see page 2) and continued preservation efforts at Harmony Grove and Mt. Olive cemeteries. Again, all of these events, preservation efforts and achievements on the Buckhead StoryLines project would not be possible without you. We sincerely appreciate your continued support and look forward to seeing you at our events this upcoming year.

Very truly yours,
James M. Ottley

Upcoming Events



“Modern Buckhead”: An Atlanta Regional Historic Preservation Forum, Friday, February 26th, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

In February, Buckhead Heritage and the Atlanta Regional Commission will co-host a regional Preservation Forum on Buckhead’s Modern architecture. A year ago, at the request of Buckhead Heritage, the ARC completed a survey of Modern architecture along Peachtree Road to help advance an understanding of the physical evolution of the famous corridor. We’ll share our survey and research discoveries in a lecture at the Buckhead Library, followed by a bus tour of a few of Peachtree Road’s most noteworthy Modern buildings.

The Rise of Modern Business on Peachtree Road, Wednesday, March 16th, 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

When Lenox Square opened in 1959, the *Atlanta Journal* proclaimed, “It is the first regional shopping center in the South and the largest south of New York.” It became a magnet for shops, restaurants, and office buildings around its perimeter and initiated a shift in Buckhead’s business center north from its historic core. In



Lenox Towers, designed by Stevens & Wilkinson. Photo courtesy of Tom Kaufmann.

the mid-seventies, Tower Place solidified Buckhead as an urban office center rivaling Downtown.

Buckhead’s growing business ambition after WWII was reflected in the innovative Modern architecture along Peachtree Road. This walking tour will include examples of notable architectural firms contributing to the bold new look of Peachtree, including Toombs, Amisano and Wells and Stevens & Wilkinson.

A Hunt for Buckhead's Hidden Secrets, Sunday, April 10th, 4:00 p.m.

In April, Buckhead Heritage will host its first history scavenger hunt, in which teams of participants will compete against each other to solve clues, seek out historic locations, and take pictures

related to the community’s lesser-known history. Each history clue will be worth points—the team with the most points at the end of the hunt will win—earning “history buff” bragging rights. A closing ceremony will conclude the evening. Your first clue: Meet at the private Buckhead home that served as the grounds of a badminton supper club during the 1960s—a regular event that brought together the leading bankers and attorneys in the city. More information about this event (including the answer to the above clue!) will be sent to Buckhead Heritage members as the event date approaches.

For updated event information, please visit our website at: www.buckheadheritage.com

In Review: A Storied Evening at the Calhoun-Thornwell Estate

In November, Buckhead Heritage hosted its annual fundraiser at the historic Calhoun-Thornwell estate on Pinestream Road. Guests enjoyed heavy hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and Jazz Age music while exploring one of Buckhead's most iconic homes and the stories behind its façade. Buckhead Heritage sincerely thanks Melanie Turner and Stan Benecki for generously welcoming us into their captivating home.

Also known as the Pink Castle, the home was completed in 1923 by the renowned Atlanta architectural firm Hentz, Reid & Adler. Although Calhoun family legend attributes the design to Neel Reid (1885-1926), the most accomplished and prominent Atlanta architect at the time, architectural historians generally recognize the young apprentice Philip Trammell Shutze (1890-1982) as the principal designer, making the

Calhoun house his first work. Although still the firm's chief designer at the time, Reid was already slowed by a brain tumor that would later take his life. By this time, the firm of Hentz, Reid & Adler employed a team of talented associates and assistants, including James Means, Lewis Edmund Crook Jr., and Ernest "Ed" Ivey, all of whom contributed to the working drawings for the house.



The entrance hall features a monochrome painting by prominent American muralist Allyn Cox (1896-1982). Entitled "Philemon and Baucis," it is the only remaining mural of three that Cox painted for the home. Photo courtesy of Jessica McCarron.

The design for the house was undoubtedly influenced by the seventeenth-century Italian villas Cuzzano near Verona and Gori in Siena. The entrance piers, which were originally situated on axis with the house, powerfully framed the garden façade from West Paces Ferry Road. They were modeled on similar baroque piers at the Villa Cuzzano. Meanwhile, the theatrical façade echoed the outline of Villa Gori. To recreate the look of Italian villa precedents, the exterior stucco walls of the home were also deliberately aged during construction.

The estate originally encompassed one hundred acres stretching from West Paces Ferry to Howell Mill Road. Early in its existence, eighteen acres were formally developed and included an orchard, tennis courts, and formal gardens. During the 1930s, part of the estate's undeveloped land to the south was used for the construction of Highway 41 to Marietta. Later in the 1950s, parts of the estate were sold and subdivided for residential development. Then in 1960, the home and the immediately surrounding eighteen acres were sold to the Cates Development Company. The following year, Atlanta-native Edward Allison Thornwell Jr. purchased the Calhoun home and boxwood gardens—a total of about one-and-a-half acres—from the development company. And the *Atlanta Constitution* joyously announced: *Beauty lovers who have for years admired the magnificent Calhoun home on West Paces Ferry Road, referred to by teen-agers as the Pink Castle, will be delighted to learn that it will not be demolished to make way for an exclusive new subdivision.*

Instead, the subdivision—which included twenty building lots—was created around it. The estate's original baroque piers still exist; however, one was moved to form a wider entrance to what became Pinestream Road, which was cut through the estate's former grounds. In 1980, the home was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its nomination noted that it was the best example of an Italian Baroque Villa in Georgia.

Buckhead Heritage looks forward to inviting our supporters to join us for another Storied Evening in the fall of 2016. Stay tuned for an announcement of which iconic Buckhead residence we will explore next!

Mt. Olive Cemetery Update

In June 2015, Buckhead Heritage commissioned restoration specialists to complete the repair of headstones at Mt. Olive Cemetery that had been vandalized earlier in the year. At the same time, the specialists stabilized gravestones that were leaning precariously to ensure their preservation, reset brick and fieldstone grave enclosures to make them clearly visible, and cleaned headstones to remove moss and lichens and to make existing inscriptions more legible.

One of those headstones stabilized and cleaned marks the burial place of Essie Davis. She was only in her 20s when she died in 1928. She had been working as a maid in the Buckhead community when she died. Sadly, obituary and death certificate research indicates that Ms. Davis was already a widow at her young age; her husband, Matthew Davis, was buried at the same cemetery in 1925. Ms. Davis's headstone features a small lamb at the top, a motif often used in cemeteries to symbolize innocence or youth. Meanwhile, the heart around her name on the front of the marker has been interpreted by a local historian to mean that "she has gone from being surrounded by her parents' love to rest in God's love."

Buckhead Heritage sincerely thanks restoration specialists Ashley Shares, Chaunce Braun, and Michael Wettlaufer for their expert work and the donors who made this project possible.



The gravestone of Essie Davis before and after stabilization and cleaning.



Vandalized headstone before and after repairs.

Buckhead StoryLines Interpretive Program Update

Last year, Buckhead Heritage completed its Master Interpretive Plan for a program of innovative exhibits and interpretive signage that will be integrated into parks and plazas and along trails and sidewalks throughout the community. We are thrilled to announce that Buckhead Heritage has raised \$40,000 through the generosity of its Board of Directors and Pamela Anne Isdell to install the first exhibit in the heart of historic Buckhead. Stay tuned this spring for details on the unveiling!

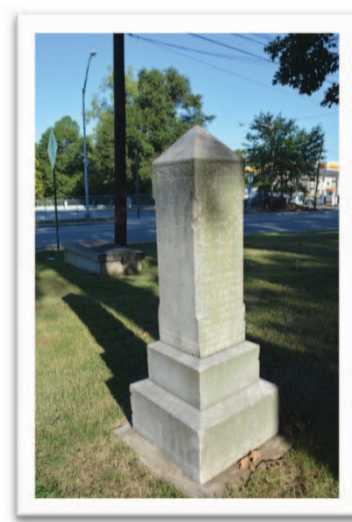
We are also very excited to announce that in November our plan book for the interpretive program won first place in its category in the National Association for Interpretation's Interpretive Media Awards Competition. The printed plan book is both a management document to guide implementation of our *Buckhead StoryLines* interpretive program and a marketing and fundraising tool for the project. The plan content and the book's design presentation were equally judged. The competition serves to promote excellence in the delivery of natural, cultural, and historical interpretation through the exchange of ideas among professionals in the field.



New Online Resource for Buckhead's Historic Cemeteries

There are ten historic cemeteries in Buckhead, each with their own unique stories to tell. Some of these burying grounds are relatively large and associated with active church communities (New Hope AME, Pleasant Hill, and Sardis), while others are small and relatively unknown (Guess, Piney Grove, and Lowery-Stephens). Two have been the focus of recent Buckhead Heritage rehabilitation projects (Harmony Grove and Mt. Olive). Another is immediately adjacent to busy Howell Mill Road (Old Mt. Zion / Northside Park), and one is unmarked – the former almshouse cemetery – and located near the fifth green at North Fulton Golf Course at Chastain (North Fulton Park). Buckhead Heritage recently launched a new "Historic Cemeteries" section on our website with stories about cemetery residents and their histories, with photography and links to additional information.

The first cemetery that famed Atlanta historian Franklin Garrett recorded for his necrology project was Old Mt. Zion / Northside Park on Howell Mill in 1930. It is Garrett's documentation that reveals that the cemetery contains more than the two marked burials we see today, possibly as many as thirty. One of the marked burials is Sgt. William Moore, a soldier who fell during the Battle of Peachtree Creek. He rests under the site's obelisk memorial, which was actually placed by relatives nearly 36 years after Moore's death.



Obelisk marking grave of Sgt. William Moore at Old Mt. Zion / Northside Park Cemetery. Photograph courtesy of Jessica McCarron.

Start exploring more of the stories at: <http://www.buckheadheritage.com/content/historic-cemeteries>.

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Buckhead Heritage Society

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Historic Buckhead: An Illustrated History

Last year, Buckhead Heritage announced that it had partnered with a nationally recognized publisher to produce a new illustrated history of Buckhead. Unfortunately, due to several factors beyond Buckhead Heritage's control, the project has been cancelled by the publisher. However, we look forward to continuing to share the stories of Buckhead's history through programming and digital platforms, including our website and YouTube channel, as well as our forthcoming *Buckhead StoryLines* interpretive program.



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