



Buckhead Heritage Society

NEWSLETTER, Winter 2014-2015

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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

2014 was another banner year for Buckhead Heritage! We hosted numerous great events and conducted two workdays at historic Mt. Olive Cemetery. We were also honored to serve on and provide technical advice to the Ida Williams/Buckhead Library Historic Marker Committee. And we were fortunate to be able to offer our members a glimpse of the wonderful Vaughn Nixon House on Andrews Drive at our holiday party thanks to the hospitality of Lisa and John Snodgrass. Our greatest achievement of 2014, however, was undoubtedly the completion of an Interpretive Master Plan for Buckhead.

While 2014 was an exciting year for Buckhead Heritage, 2015 promises to be even more exciting as we move into the fundraising phase for implementation of our Interpretive Master Plan. Once again, we will also have a slate of interesting lectures and events planned for your enjoyment.

On another note, you will notice some changes in the leadership of Buckhead Heritage during 2015. I am nearing the end of my third three (3) year term as President of the organization and our By-Laws dictate that the President of the organization cannot serve more than three consecutive terms. As such, I will transition into the role of Past President effective June 1, 2015, and in that capacity will serve as a steadfast advisor to the Board and remain actively involved in fundraising for the organization. Meanwhile, James Ottley will assume the role of President. The Ottley name is as old as Buckhead itself and James has a keen interest in Atlanta history, having authored two books on the subject. James has also served as a Board Member and Executive Committee member for several years and he will make a great President. I look forward to assisting him in making this important transition.

Buckhead Heritage has been a huge part of my life over the past decade. There are far too many people to thank who have assisted me over the years. I would especially like to thank, however, Sam Massell, who encouraged me to follow my vision of founding the organization and agreed to be our first Board Member. I would also like to thank Tamara Bazzle and Bob Helget who have been on the Board and the Executive Committee since the inception of the organization and have worked tirelessly to make Buckhead Heritage the success that it is today. I would also like to thank Executive Committee Members, Chad Wright, James Ottley and all of the other Board Members who have served over the years. Of course, I would be remiss in not thanking our incomparable Executive Director, Erica Danylchak. Buckhead Heritage will continue to thrive in their capable hands. Finally, I would like to thank you, our members, for supporting us financially and attending our events. None of this would have been possible without you!

Sincerely,

Wright Mitchell

Events



Atlanta History for Cocktail Parties II: Another Round, January 9, 2014

Guests joined Buckhead Heritage for an evening of factoids, trivia, and anecdotes of Atlanta's most interesting stories as author and Buckhead Heritage board member James Ottley presented his recently published book, *Atlanta History for Cocktail Parties II: Another Round*.

Tours of Sardis Church and Cemetery, March 22, 2014

As part of the Atlanta Preservation Center's *Phoenix Flies: A Celebration of Historic Sites*, Buckhead Heritage hosted tours of Sardis Church and Cemetery. Erica Danylchak, the Society's Executive Director, guided guests through the cemetery to see the headstones of many of Buckhead's earliest citizens including Henry Irby (1807-1879), Wesley Collier (1824-1906), and Napoleon Cheshire (1843-1921). Guests also had a chance to explore the interior of the church building, which was designed by architect Owen Southwell and completed in 1927. The



The historic Vaughn Nixon House, site of Buckhead Heritage's 2014 fundraiser.

property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012 after Buckhead Heritage prepared the nomination materials.

A Changing Wind: Commerce and Conflict in Civil War Atlanta, May 22, 2014

The Atlanta History Center, in partnership with Buckhead Heritage, hosted a lecture by Wendy Hamand Venet on her recent book, *A Changing Wind*, which explores the experiences of Atlanta's civilians during the city's rapid growth, Civil War siege and devastation, Reconstruction, and emergence as a New South city.

An Iliad of Woes: Peachtree Creek and the Battles for Atlanta, July 18, 2014

Buckhead Heritage hosted Russell S. Bonds, author of

War Like the Thunderbolt, for a lecture on the desperate fighting at the gates of the Gate City in the summer of 1864. Bonds described in vivid detail the characters, costs, and consequences of the battles for Atlanta.

Strummin' on the Porch, October 2, 2014

The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation partnered with Buckhead Heritage to host a free outdoor concert under the stars at historic Rhodes Hall, featuring local singer/songwriter Ryan Boss.

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

A Holiday Gathering Benefiting Buckhead Heritage, December 11, 2014

Buckhead Heritage hosted its annual fundraiser at the historic Vaughn Nixon House on Andrews Drive. At the event, guests enjoyed a savory menu of heavy hors d'oeuvres, free-flowing cocktails, live instrumental music, and warm camaraderie in a festive atmosphere. The evening offered guests a rare glimpse inside the historic home, which was breathtakingly decorated for the holidays. Buckhead Heritage sincerely thanks Lisa and John Snodgrass for generously welcoming Buckhead Heritage and its members into their lovely home.

Completed in 1926, the Vaughn Nixon House was one of J. Neel Reid's last designs. Reid died young of brain cancer in February of that year when his firm Hentz, Reid & Adler was at its prime. The firm had founded the Georgia school of classicists and had been enormously influential in shaping the residential aesthetic of the state. Upon Reid's death, the Georgia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects issued a memorial: "At a time when there was scarcely a trained architect in the South, when buildings were for the most part merely accumulations of materials . . . he had an inspiration of what architecture should be and would mean to the South."

Reid modeled the main façade of the Vaughn Nixon House after the Hammond-Harwood House (1773-74) in Annapolis, Maryland, one of the premiere examples of colonial era architecture in America. The floor plan and the other façades of the Vaughn Nixon House, including the beautiful garden elevation with its central columned loggia, were Reid's innovations.

Mt. Olive Cemetery Update

In May and June, Buckhead Heritage organized two workdays at historic Mt. Olive Cemetery on Pharr Road. Under the direction of Buckhead Heritage board member Harriet Kirkpatrick, a group of 5th and 6th graders from Haygood Methodist Church helped clear leaf debris, uncovering fieldstone grave markers and horizontal bricks around grave plots. Meanwhile, hard-working volunteers from J.P. Turner & Company Capital Management, LLC, selectively pruned trees and shrubs along a section of the perimeter of the cemetery. Buckhead Heritage is working to provide more visibility into the cemetery in an effort to curtail unwelcome activities at the site. Buckhead Heritage extends a sincere thank-you to Chris Hastings and Arbormedics for donating services to remove collected tree limbs from Mt. Olive.



Volunteers from Buckhead Heritage and J.P. Turner & Company Capital Management, LLC, at Mt. Olive Cemetery.

Ida Williams Marker Unveiled

In September, the Thomas Johnson Chapter of the National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century and the North Side Library Association officially dedicated and unveiled a new historic marker at the Buckhead Branch Library. Buckhead Heritage was honored to serve on the Historic Marker Committee and assist with this important community project. The marker commemorates Ida Williams and her efforts to establish Buckhead's first library and also recognizes the architectural significance of the current library building:

THE BUCKHEAD LIBRARY SITS ON PROPERTY THAT WAS FORMERLY IN THE MUSCOGEE/CREEK INDIAN NATION. THE FUTURE LIBRARY LOT WAS PART OF THE 1821 GEORGIA LAND LOTTERY, LAND LOT 99, DISTRICT 17, WHICH WAS PURCHASED IN 1838 BY PIONEER HENRY IRBY FOR \$650.

IDA WILLIAMS (1869 – 1935) ESTABLISHED A PUBLIC LIBRARY IN BUCKHEAD FOLLOWING A DISTINGUISHED CAREER AS AN EDUCATOR. A STRONG BELIEVER IN EDUCATION THROUGH READING, SHE INSPIRED HER WOMEN'S CLUB TO ACQUIRE BOOKS, MONEY, AND PLEDGES RESULTING IN THE FORMATION OF THE NORTH SIDE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION IN 1929.

WITH MONEY RAISED FROM DONATIONS, BAKE SALES, AND SEWING PROJECTS, THE ASSOCIATION PURCHASED THE BUCKHEAD AVENUE LOT IN 1939 FOR \$2,650. THE LAND WAS DEEDED TO FULTON COUNTY IN 1940 BY THE NORTH SIDE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION AFTER THE MEMBERS VOTED THAT THE LIBRARY BECOME PART OF THE CARNEGIE LIBRARY SYSTEM OF ATLANTA. THROUGH FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT'S WORKS PROGRESS

ADMINISTRATION, THE IDA WILLIAMS LIBRARY, DESIGNED BY COOPER AND COOPER, WAS CONSTRUCTED IN 1942. SIX YEARS AFTER MISS WILLIAMS' DEATH, THE 6,000-SQUARE-FOOT NEO-CLASSICAL BUILDING WAS DEDICATED IN HER HONOR.

IN 1985, THE VOTERS OF FULTON COUNTY APPROVED A \$38,000,000 LIBRARY CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM. THE 1942 LIBRARY WAS DEMOLISHED AND THE AWARD WINNING 20,000 SQUARE FOOT BUCKHEAD LIBRARY, DESIGNED BY ARCHITECTS MACK SCOGIN AND MERRILL ELAM OF SCOGIN, ELAM AND BRAY, OPENED IN 1989.

MISS WILLIAMS IS BURIED AT SARDIS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, 3725 POWERS FERRY RD., NW, ATLANTA, GEORGIA. BECAUSE OF HER LEADERSHIP, THE IDEA OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY ON BUCKHEAD AVENUE IS A CONTINUING REALITY. THIS MEMORIAL SERVES AS A CONSTANT REMINDER OF THE POWER OF ONE INDIVIDUAL TO INFLUENCE COMMUNITY LIFE.



Volunteers at the historic marker dedication dress in the fashion of Miss Ida Williams and the original members of the North Side Library Association.

Buckhead Heritage Completes an Interpretive Master Plan for the Community

Over the past year, Buckhead Heritage has been working to complete an Interpretive Master Plan for the community which provides both a conceptual framework for a community-wide interpretive program and an action plan for implementation. The interpretive program envisioned will engage urban explorers in experiences that entertain, educate, and cultivate an understanding of Buckhead's rich history.

The Interpretive Master Plan is an outgrowth of the Buckhead Greenspace Action Plan. During the community engagement process for that plan, stakeholders agreed that integrating historical interpretation into the community's greenspace system would enrich the experience of Buckhead's existing and future network of parks, trails, and greenspaces, further the community's awareness of Buckhead's history, and position Buckhead to take advantage of the State of Georgia's fastest growing tourism industry segment—heritage tourism.

Communities across the country use various interpretive strategies to tell their local history, from historical markers, to digital apps, to bike and bus tours, to physical design. So, what would Buckhead's interpretive program look like? What stories would be told? And where would they be told?

In the fall of 2013, Buckhead Heritage hired Signature Design, a unique collaborative of interpretive planners, designers, and content developers, to help answer these questions. Buckhead Heritage also engaged a 28-member steering committee representing non-profit organizations, neighborhood associations, area conservancies, and local government to create a thoughtful roadmap for building an interpretive experience in Buckhead. Together, the team developed an overarching and integrated set of Buckhead storylines, created a storyline site map, conceived preliminary concept plans for exhibits and signage, and produced a strategy for implementation. This plan will be the foundation of Buckhead Heritage's work for several years to come.

In September, Buckhead Heritage unveiled the interpretive exhibit and signage concepts to the public at the Buckhead Business Association's 10th Annual Taste of Buckhead. At the event, the Buckhead Business Association (BBA) held a silent auction with part of the proceeds benefiting Buckhead Heritage and the implementation of the interpretive plan. Then, at its annual Holiday Party on December 11th, the BBA formally presented Buckhead Heritage with a donation of \$3,000. Buckhead Heritage thanks the BBA for its ongoing support!

Several of the innovative interpretive concepts are featured on the following pages. For more information on the plan and to see additional proposed concepts, please visit www.buckheadheritage.com.

Buckhead Heritage sincerely thanks the following donors for providing funding for the creation of the Interpretive Master Plan:

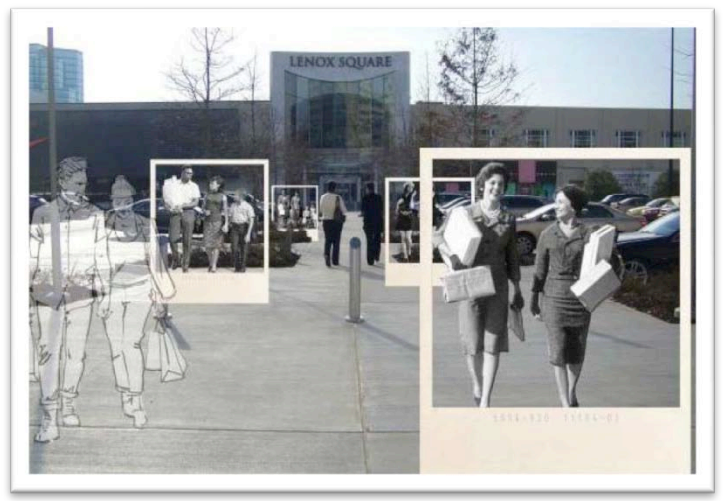
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Interpretive Master Plan Concepts

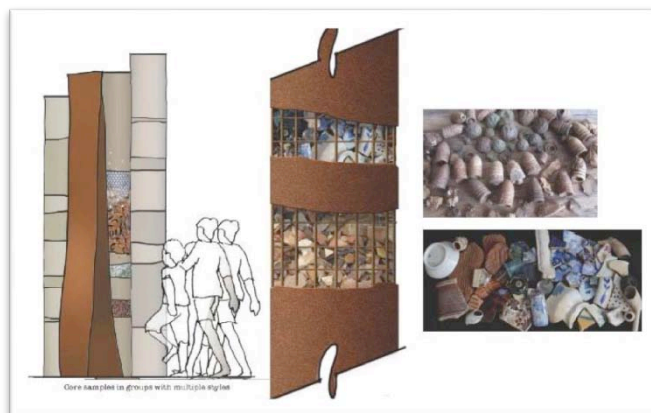
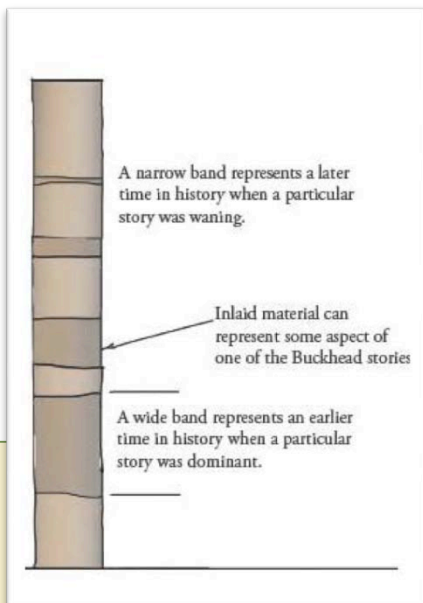
The installations that have been envisioned as part of the Interpretive Master Plan will evoke the past in parks as well as urban spaces in Buckhead. They will be physical expressions of Buckhead's history that will spark curiosity and engage people in memorable ways.



Parallels of the Past Concept: When new development has altered historic buildings, historical images can show the past as a parallel universe.



Photobombing History Concept: Rather than illustrating history in the traditional interpretive sign format, history can be brought to life in a human scale by populating the streets with people from the past.



Cores of History Concept: Just as core samples are pulled out to study the earth below, “cores of history” can rise up to represent the passage of time in Buckhead's history and the layered history of certain sites. Different time periods can be represented through various patterns and textures or with implied or inexpensive artifacts encased in gabions.



Historic Playgrounds Concept: The atmosphere of historic scenes like a Civil War encampment can still resonate in contemporary settings. Adults can see these as an echo of a Civil War encampment, and children can see them as playful structures for climbing and spontaneous games.



Ghosts of History Concept: Human scale frames of figures can tell the story of people who have inhabited a space in the past. The ghost-like nature of the figures can inspire people to imagine stories and read more conventional interpretive signs to seek out deeper information.



Graphic Sign Standards Concept: A sign standards program can unite the various interpretive sites. Iconic markers can contain directional, wayfinding, mapping, and interpretive storytelling information.



Plaza Towers on Peachtree Road; Architect: Ted Levy; Style: New Formalism; Constructed: 1967-70; Builder: McDonough Construction Co. Photo courtesy of the Atlanta Regional Commission.

Atlanta Regional Commission Completes Modern Survey of Peachtree Road to Assist Buckhead Heritage's Interpretive Plan

In December, the Atlanta Regional Commission completed a Modern Resources Survey of Peachtree Road in Buckhead to assist Buckhead Heritage with its Interpretive Master Plan and forthcoming programming. Interpretation, after all, often considers how the built environment tells the story of key milestones in the community's history.

The Modern architecture along Peachtree Road, in fact, tells an important story:

"Particularly after World War II, Atlanta was moving away from the classical architectural influence that had dominated much of its history. During this time, Atlanta was positioning itself to become a city of national prominence, and would later continue a step further to define itself as an international city.

The ambitious 1952 annexation which brought the Buckhead area into the city included over 50,000 acres of land and added approximately 100,000 new residents—by far the largest annexation in its history, tripling the size of the city. The new modern architecture along Peachtree reflected the ambition of the age."

The survey, which focuses on buildings constructed between 1940 and 1990, includes photographic documentation of Modern resources and lists known architects, builders, architectural styles, and construction dates. It also includes color-coded maps of buildings based on those construction dates, which provide clear visual representations of the evolution of the corridor.

The information in this survey is already serving as the basis for a new walking tour that will be presented by Buckhead Heritage and the Atlanta Regional Commission during the Atlanta Preservation Center's 2015 Phoenix Flies. Stay tuned for more details on this event!

Buckhead Heritage expresses its sincerest thanks to Allison Duncan, Principal Planner, Atlanta Regional Commission, for stewarding this project, Dr. Robert Craig, Professor Emeritus, Georgia Tech College of Architecture, for providing invaluable information on the architects and builders of many of the structures, and George Rounds, former Atlanta Regional Commission intern, for spending numerous hours to research and document the buildings.

The National Register Recognizes the Gresham Building at The Galloway School

In 2014, the Gresham Building at The Galloway School was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of its architectural significance and its important role in social history as the former Fulton County Almshouse.

In October, in celebration of the National Register listing, The Galloway School organized Gresham History Day and invited community partners, including Buckhead Heritage, to engage students in conversation about the history of the building and the land around it. Buckhead Heritage presented students with a bit of background on almshouses and then shared the local story of the almshouses of Fulton County. Here's a taste of what they learned.

Alms, in the Christian custom, are money or services donated to

help the poor. The term "almshouse" was first used in England, where institutions were established to house poor, aged, and distressed people over a thousand years ago. In the late 1600s, Boston became home to the first almshouse in the United States. In this country, almshouses were often called poor houses or poor farms. They flourished first in urban areas of the North and came later to the largely agrarian South. In the South, they were generally authorized and under the control of the county.

In 1857, Fulton County voted to

establish its first almshouse, which would provide institutional care for elderly and poor residents who had nowhere else to go. The first Fulton County almshouse was located on the west side of Atlanta on the site of the gatehouse of Westview Cemetery. Canon fire ravaged the building during the Civil War, however, and the county chose to rebuild its almshouse in 1869 on a remote rural site near the intersection of today's Peachtree and Piedmont roads—where Tower Place is today.

This almshouse property encompassed just a handful of wooden duplexes at first. Later a substantial, architect-designed building joined them. The property also included extensive farmland to help make the institution self-sufficient. The county made the case that it could achieve its high moral purpose of helping the needy *without* the almshouse being a drain on county money. Female convicts, considered free labor by the county, joined the residents on the almshouse campus in 1882. Although the paupers were expected to work if they could, the convicts carried the load, farming the property and performing domestic chores.

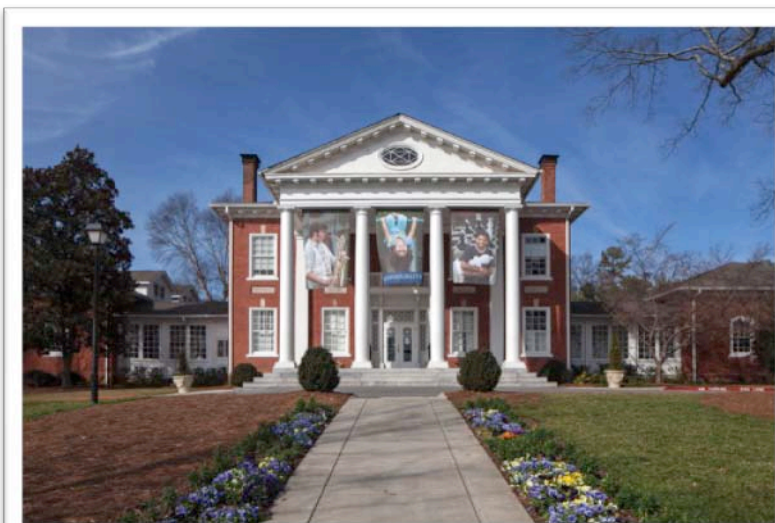
When this area became increasingly attractive for residential development in the early 20th century, the county experienced mounting pressure to relocate the almshouse. Eventually, the county sold its almshouse property and purchased 1,000 acres further north for two new almshouses. In the midst of the Jim Crow era, the county established one institution for white residents (today's Gresham Building) and one for black residents (today's Chastain Arts Center). Part of the almshouse land purchase later became Chastain Park.

The Gresham Building was designed by the prominent Atlanta architectural firm of Morgan and Dillon and was completed in 1911. At the front of the

Neo-classical Revival style building, administrative offices and nursing facilities were located on the first floor. The family of the superintendent lived on the second floor. The building was built to house a total of 145 residents. The wings on the east and west sides of the building complex served as separate women's and men's residential halls. Each of today's classrooms was originally two separate rooms, which housed three to four people each. The last rooms on each wing were infirmary wards for bedridden patients.

The prestige of the designers as well as the building's imposing architecture reflected the importance of the almshouse institution to the county. And a local newspaper noted at the time that the building cost \$50,000, a handsome sum for that era.

The county was still cost-conscious, however. Interestingly, the same newspaper article noted that brick for the Gresham Building was made by the female convicts on the former



The Gresham Building at The Galloway School, which was formerly the Fulton County Almshouse. Photo courtesy of Charlie Miller, Historic Preservation Division, Georgia DNR.

almshouse property at Peachtree and Piedmont roads. And just as the former almshouse property had employed convict labor, so too did this one. Part of the county's acreage along Powers Ferry and West Wieuca roads was used as a "prison farm" where female convicts worked in the fields; some of the produce they tended was consumed at the almshouses.

The Gresham Building served as the Fulton County Almshouse until 1963, long after a public park surrounded it in the late 1930s. The Galloway School established itself in the building in 1969.

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MATCHING GIFTS:

The Coca-Cola Company

**We sincerely apologize for
any errors or omissions in
this list.**

CUT HERE



Buckhead Heritage Society

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

- ☐ Standing Peachtree Member\$50
- ☐ Montgomery's Ferry Member\$100
- ☐ Moore's Mill Contributor\$250
- ☐ Howell's Battery Contributor\$500
- ☐ Woodhaven Patron\$1000
- ☐ Irbyville Society\$1500—\$5000
- ☐ My company has a matching gift program
- ☐ I am interested in corporate sponsorship

MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES:

- **annual newsletter**
- **invitations and early registration to educational programs, children's events, and other special events**
- **recognition in our publications**
- **reduced ticket prices to most events**

Name, as it is to appear on the Members' List:

Mailing Address:

Primary Phone: _____

Secondary Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please send this form and your check payable to:

Buckhead Heritage
3180 Mathieson Drive, Suite 200
Atlanta, GA 30305
Or join online at
www.buckheadheritage.com

Buckhead Heritage extends a special thank-you to the following:

Arbormedics
Atlanta History Center
Susan Barnard
Ken Bazzle/Mathieson Exchange Lofts
Andrea Bennett
Bobby Jones Clubhouse
Russell S. Bonds
Buckhead Business Association
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Gordon Certain
Victoria Christian
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