



2024 Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council Award Winners

Award for Excellence in Student Research Using Historical Records, Grades 6-8



Joshua Buchanan

General Ray Davis Middle School student Joshua Buchanan's 2024 National History Day Georgia documentary, "1974 Super Outbreak: Nature's Fury Unleashed, Lives Changed Forever," analyzes the impact of the 1974 Tornado super outbreak and how its lessons transformed the science of forecasting, safety measures, and disaster relief in the United States. He maintains that this event, in 1974, was a fundamental turning point in this nation's approach to and understanding of the science of tornadoes as well as our outlook toward disaster relief.

Buchanan conducted extensive research using collections from the following sources: Congressional records, papers, oral histories, and newspaper collections including the *Atlanta Constitution* and *New York Times*; and records from the National Weather Service of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Archives and Records Administration, the American Presidency Project, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

Award for Excellence in Student Research Using Historical Records, Grades 9-12



Madelyn Reardanz

Ola High School of Henry County student Madaelyn Reardanz's 2024 National History Day Georgia exhibit, "Maynard for Mayor," argues that Jackson's career as Atlanta's mayor marked a turning point in the economic and political fortunes of African Americans in Atlanta and Georgia. Reardanz focuses on Jackson's impact on the economic empowerment of African Americans through his emphasis on the use of African American-owned businesses in the city's contracting program.

Reardanz conducted research in the collections of the New York Times Archives, the Georgia Archives, the Atlanta History Center, the State Archives of Florida, the Library of Congress, the Henry Hampton Collection in the Film and Media Archive of Washington University Libraries, the Bettmann Archive, the Digital Library of Georgia, the Archives Research Center in the Woodruff Library of Atlanta University Center, and the Georgia Historical Society.

Award for Excellence in Local History Advocacy



The Conservancy at Historic Washington Park

This award recognizes the Conservancy of Historic Washington Park for its outstanding dedication to preserving and promoting one of Atlanta's most significant cultural landmarks. As stewards of the first planned Black suburb in the city, the Conservancy has been instrumental in safeguarding the park's rich history and heritage. Through its tireless efforts, the Conservancy has maintained the park's historical integrity while fostering a strong sense of community. Their initiatives, such as inclusive programming and historical preservation, have not only kept the park vibrant but have also empowered the surrounding neighborhood.

The Conservancy's work has ensured that Washington Park remains a symbol of resilience and pride within Atlanta's Black community. By celebrating the park's centennial and advocating for its ongoing preservation, the Conservancy has created a lasting impact that will be felt for generations. The Conservancy's unwavering commitment to historic preservation, community engagement, and cultural advocacy serves as an inspiring example of how history and community can come together to create a brighter future.

Award for Excellence in Local Historical Advocacy



Tybee MLK Human Rights Organization, Georgia Southern University, Tybee Island Historical Society, and The City of Tybee Island

The Tybee Island Black History Trail stands as a beacon of historical preservation and education, highlighting the often-overlooked contributions of African Americans to the island's cultural and social fabric. This trail meticulously documents significant sites and narratives of the Tybee Island African American community and its enduring legacy today.

The trail includes key landmarks such as the UNESCO Site of Remembrance for the Middle Passage, the Tybee Island Lazaretto where the enslaved arriving to America were quarantined, and the more recent site of the Tybee Island Civil Rights Wade Ins. It also remembers the Alger Neighborhood, which was Tybee Island's African American neighborhood that included homes, businesses, and a church for Tybee's African American community.

The trail is a significant effort towards fostering diversity and inclusion, not just in Tybee Island but in the broader context of Georgia's history. By highlighting the African American experience, the trail provides a more comprehensive and inclusive historical narrative. It acknowledges the challenges faced by African Americans, their fight for civil rights, and their contributions to the island's development. This initiative promotes understanding and appreciation among visitors of all backgrounds, encouraging a more inclusive perspective on history.

As the trail continues to grow and develop, it holds the promise of further enriching our understanding of Tybee Island's history. The trail serves as an educational resource for local schools, historians, and visitors, offering guided tours, informational plaques, and interactive exhibits. Its impact is evident in the increased awareness and appreciation of Tybee Island's diverse heritage, fostering a sense of pride and community among residents and visitors alike.

The Tybee Island Black History Trail is a pioneering initiative that provides a crucial platform for the African American narrative, promoting diversity, inclusion, and community engagement.

As research continues and the trail expands, it will undoubtedly become an even more integral part of Georgia's historical landscape.

Award for Excellence in Documenting Georgia's History



Jeffrey Ogbar

Jeffrey Ogbar's *America's Black Capital: How African-Americans Remade Atlanta in the Shadow of the Confederacy* tells the remarkable story of how African Americans transformed Atlanta, the former heart of the Confederacy, into today's Black mecca.

Atlanta is home to some of America's most prominent Black politicians, artists, businesses, and HBCUs. Yet, in 1861, Atlanta was a final contender to be the capital of the Confederacy. Sixty years later, long after the Civil War, it was the Ku Klux Klan's sacred "Imperial City."

America's Black Capital chronicles how a center of Black excellence emerged amid virulent expressions of white nationalism, as African Americans pushed back against Confederate ideology to create an extraordinary locus of achievement. What drove them, Ogbar shows, was the belief that Black uplift would be best advanced by forging Black institutions. *America's Black Capital* is a story of Black achievement against all odds, with effects that reached far beyond Georgia, shaping the nation's popular culture, public policy, and politics.

Award for Excellence in Documenting Georgia's History



Michael L. Thurmond

Michael Thurmond's book, *James Oglethorpe, Father of Georgia: A Founder's Journey from Slave Trader to Abolitionist*, started as a quest by Thurmond to learn whether an inscription that stated Oglethorpe "was the Friend of the oppressed Negro" was true.

Did Oglethorpe truly befriend oppressed Blacks? Or was he a self-serving hypocrite, publicly opposing slavery while privately profiting from human trafficking? If Oglethorpe was indeed a friend of free and enslaved Blacks, if his empathy for the 'worthy poor' transcended racial boundaries, that evidence would necessitate a reevaluation, and possibly a revision, of his humanitarian legacy. If Oglethorpe voiced moral opposition to the transatlantic slave trade, the history of abolitionism would become more firmly rooted in Georgia's red clay. If any of these questions could be answered in the affirmative, had generations of Georgians been denied the opportunity to emulate and celebrate Oglethorpe's unique vision of our state?

Oglethorpe is widely acknowledged as the father of Georgia; however, traditional state histories, historical markers, and monuments have ignored or marginalized his staunch advocacy against slavery. Why or how could this glaring oversight of Oglethorpe's significant contributions to the abolitionist movement have occurred? Providing forthright answers to these seminal questions could rewrite Georgia's origin story.

Thurmond's effort to provide this vetting and answer these questions launched "an extended period of research, analysis, rumination, and finally, revelation" for him which, after 27 years, resulted in his book. What emerged is a far more complex and evolved delineation of this founder than three prior centuries had previously communicated.

Thurmond has written of Oglethorpe's decades-long evolution from stockholder and officer with the Royal African Company (RAC), a lucrative British slaving enterprise, to a staunch opponent of slavery. One of his core beliefs came to be that "the enslavement of human beings dehumanized both the enslaved and the enslaver."

Thurmond's hope for this work is that "if Georgians [are] exposed to a more enlightened view of our founder's values and philosophy, perhaps current and future leaders [will] be inspired to chart a more inclusive and progressive course."

Thurmond's research for this book was conducted in over 20 libraries and other institutions, including the British Library and the Georgia Archives.

Award for Excellence in Documenting Georgia's History



Clayton Trutor

Clayton Trutor's book, *Loserville: How Professional Sports Remade Atlanta—and How Atlanta Remade Professional Sports*, is a history of both Atlanta and its sports teams.

In July 1975, the editors of the *Atlanta Constitution* ran a two-part series entitled "Loserville, U.S.A." The series detailed the futility of Atlanta's four professional sports teams in the decade following the 1966 arrival of its first two major league franchises, the Atlanta Braves and the Atlanta Falcons. Two years later, the Atlanta Hawks became the city's third major professional sports franchise. In 1972, the NHL granted the Flames expansion franchise to the city, making Atlanta the first southern city with teams in all four of the big leagues. The excitement surrounding the arrival of four professional franchises in a six-year period soon gave way to widespread frustration and, eventually, widespread apathy.

All four of Atlanta's franchises struggled in the standings and struggled to draw fans to their games. Atlantans' indifference to their new teams took place amid the social and political fracturing that had resulted from a new Black majority in Atlanta and a predominately white suburban exodus. Sports could never quite bridge the divergence between the two.

Loserville examines the pursuit, arrival, and response to professional sports in Atlanta during its first decade as a major league city (1966–75). It also scrutinizes the origins of the primary model for acquiring professional sports franchises, offers of municipal financing for new stadiums.

Award for Excellence in Documenting Georgia's History



Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Department of Community Affairs - Historic Preservation Division, and New South Associates

The Context and Handbook for the Identification and Evaluation of Georgia's Historic Burial Grounds is intended to aid Section 106 practitioners in identifying and evaluating burial grounds for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

Cemeteries carry emotional significance within their respective communities and can provide a depth of historical and archaeological information, yet they can contain inherent challenges when identifying them.

The Cemetery Context not only provides a narrative history of Georgia's cemeteries, but it also creates a standard vocabulary to describe these spaces and provides tools for Section 106 evaluations. While written for cultural resource professionals, this *Context* may serve the additional purpose of helping anyone interested in Georgia's cemeteries understand their development, composition, and the important role they have played, and continue to contribute to Georgia's history and culture. *The Cemetery Context* aids the reader in understanding the layers of history that comprise burial grounds in Georgia and is a valuable resource for the Section 106 practitioner.

Award for Excellence in Research Using the Holdings of Archives



Sara A. H. Butler

Sara A. Butler's book, *Fortune and Folly: The Weird and Wonderful Life of the South's Most Eccentric Millionaire*, examines the growth of Atlanta through the story of Asa Griggs Candler, Jr.

Nestled in the outskirts of Atlanta, in a suburb called Druid Hills, lies Briarcliff Mansion. It sits on Briarcliff Road in the Briarcliff neighborhood, surrounded by strip malls and businesses with Briarcliff in their names. The mansion and the land it occupies are owned by Emory University. *Fortune and Folly*, in part, illuminates the largely lost story of how the mansion, and the entire surrounding neighborhood, got its name. But to understand the mansion, we have to understand the man who built it.

Briarcliff Mansion once belonged to a man named Asa Candler, Jr.—or Buddie as friends and family knew him. The second son and namesake of Coca-Cola founder Asa Griggs Candler, Buddie was a wealthy real estate developer of great successes and greater failures. A man of big vision and bigger adventures, and a socialite whose boisterous, unapologetic personality made him both beloved and reviled in the Atlanta community between 1910 and 1950. But after he passed away in 1953, his stories faded from memory, either tangled up with or overshadowed by his father's legacy.

It's no mystery why Briarcliff garners attention. It's self-consciously grandiose, built to display maximum grandeur to the neighborhood. It towers over the landscape, set far back from the road behind a filled-in, overgrown pool. Its face is stitched together where a music hall was added two years after the main house was completed, and the bricks don't quite match up.

Fortune and Folly offers a deep-dive into the life of Asa Candler, Jr. to excavate a piece—and place—of Atlanta history.

Award for Excellence in Research Using the Holdings of Archives



Lisa L. Denmark

Lisa L. Denmark's *Savannah's Midnight Hour; Boosterism, Growth and Commerce in a Nineteenth-Century American City* is the first major historical work written with substantial use of, and reference to, the holdings of the City of Savannah Municipal Archives.

Denmark has produced an economic and financial history of Savannah through the 19th Century, covering the optimistic, risk-taking conduct of local public officials with public funds in the name of civic improvements and economic development.

The author constructs the arc that began with Savannah's desire to surpass the prominence of its rival sister city of Charleston to become the New York and Liverpool of the South. Toward this end the city invested in numerous untested ventures with promised and highly anticipated payoffs of increased revenues for the local government and reduced taxes and fees for citizens.

These many ventures included steamship lines, canals, harbor dredging, swamp draining, sewer construction, and ultimately, the irresistible elixir: railroads! The principal funding mechanism for these ventures was the issuance of municipal bonds and mayor's notes. As the decades passed and included a civil war, national depressions, and a yellow fever epidemic, many projects fell short of expectations or experienced outright failure, and more and more crippling municipal debt was accumulated, with local population and revenues failing to keep pace sufficiently to make repayment schedules, so that the "go to" model became floating new bonds just to pay off old bonds and to maintain routine operating funds. A spiraling debt cycle intensified during Reconstruction with creative but still ill-destined refinancing machinations, local political controversies, legislative entreaties, judicial debates all the way to the Supreme Court, and draconian cuts to basic municipal services, such as streetlights, police staffing, and public education; until, ultimately, in 1877, municipal default ensued.

Among primary sources utilized for *Savannah's Midnight Hour* were over 50 contemporaneous

newspapers and commercial periodicals. In addition to records series held by the City of Savannah Municipal Archives, manuscript collections from seven other archival institutions were also sourced

With *Savannah's Midnight Hour*, Dr. Denmark has established that it was a much more intricate, complicated, and nuanced collapse which brewed over half a century before imploding.

Award for Excellence in Research Using the Holdings of Archives



Paul M. Pressly

Paul M. Pressly's book, *A Southern Underground Railroad: Black Georgians and the Promise of Spanish Florida and Indian Country*, offers a new Atlantic World perspective that should appeal to both popular and scholarly readers interested in early North American history and the history of slavery.

The Southeast provided a vital link between the Black self-emancipation that occurred during the American Revolution and the growth of the Underground Railroad in the final years of the antebellum period. From the beginning of the Revolutionary War to the eve of the First Seminole War in 1817, hundreds and eventually several thousands of Africans and African Americans in Georgia, and to a lesser extent South Carolina, crossed the borders and boundaries that separated the Lowcountry from the British and Spanish in coastal Florida and from the Seminole and Creek people in the vast interior of the Southeast. Even in times of peace, there remained a steady flow of individuals moving south and southwest, reflecting the aspirations of a captive people.

A Southern Underground Railroad constitutes a powerful tale of how enslaved men and women found freedom and human dignity.

Lifetime Achievement Award



Christi Jackson

Christi Jackson has exhibited exemplary dedication to preserving and advocating for local African American history in Atlanta. As the Founder and Chair of the Conservancy at Washington Park, she has spearheaded numerous initiatives, including the creation of the Washington Park Historic Archive and the “Our Westside Story” documentary project. Her work has brought to light the often-overlooked histories of westside Atlanta, ensuring they are preserved for future generations. Her ability to build strong relationships with stakeholders and decision-makers has been crucial to the progress and preservation of the Westside. Her tireless advocacy and leadership have made a lasting impact on the development and prosperity of the area. Christi Jackson embodies the very essence of community spirit and will continue to inspire others for years to come.

Special Recognition



R. J. Taylor, Jr. Foundation

For over four decades, the R. J. Taylor, Jr. Foundation has been a pillar of support for genealogical research in Georgia, preserving the state's rich historical records for future generations. The Taylor Foundation's commitment to making genealogical resources accessible has transformed the landscape of historical research in Georgia.

The R. J. Taylor, Jr. Foundation was created in 1971 under an irrevocable trust established by Mr. R. J. Taylor, Jr., for the purpose of promoting genealogical research and study in Georgia. His own extensive personal research gave Mr. Taylor a deep concern about the loss of Georgia's early records and a keen appreciation for the valuable information contained in the state's records.

By funding projects that document pre-1920s Georgia records, it has enabled countless individuals to uncover their ancestral histories and connect with their heritage. The impact of the Taylor Foundation extends beyond just preserving history; it has fostered a deeper understanding and appreciation of Georgia's past. Scholars, historians, and family researchers alike have benefited from the Foundation's dedication to making genealogical information available to all.

The Foundation's unwavering dedication to the preservation of Georgia's genealogical records and its significant contributions to historical research ensures that the stories of Georgia's past will continue to be told for generations to come.