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GHRAC HONORS 2025 AWARD WINNERS ACROSS GEORGIA

The Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council (GHRAC), supported by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, recognized outstanding achievements in the creation, research, and use of historical records during its twenty-third annual GHRAC Awards ceremony at the Georgia Archives on Monday, October 13, 2025. The awards honor students, educators, authors, archivists, and community leaders who advance the documentation and understanding of Georgia history.

Christopher Davidson, State Archivist and Assistant Vice Chancellor; Dr. Costas Spirou, Interim Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer, University System of Georgia; and Dr. Toby Graham, the Chair of GHRAC, presented the 2025 awards on behalf of the council.

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

Kassie Jo White and Brennan West
Thomas County Middle School

Thomas County Middle School students, Brennan West and Kassie Jo White, created a National History Day exhibit titled “Power to the People – The Rights and Responsibilities of Rural Electrification.” Their project investigates the Rural Electrification Act and its impact on rural communities. They used primary sources from national and state institutions, including the Library of Congress, the Georgia Archives, and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Their work earned recognition for effective use of archival materials at the 2025 National History Day state contest.



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

Jonathan Dorminy

Sola Fide Homeschool

Accepted by John and Ann Dorminy on behalf of Jonathan Dorminy.

Jonathan Dorminy's National History Day Georgia 2025 performance, "Shirked Responsibilities: John Bingham's Fourteenth Amendment and Rights that Shall Not Be Infringed," examines the development of constitutional rights through Congressman John Bingham's role in shaping the Fourteenth Amendment. He consulted materials from the Library of Congress, Congressional Records, the Georgia Archives, NARA, and historical newspaper collections. Dorminy has received this recognition previously and continues to demonstrate strong research skills.



Award for Excellence in Student Research Using Historical Records, Undergraduate

Max Besselman

Georgia Southern University

Max Besselman conducted research through the Sharing Stories of 1977 project, which documents delegates to the First National Women's Conference. He authored biographies of eleven Georgia delegates using Georgia archival sources, oral histories, and published materials. His work adds to the understanding of women's political advocacy in the late 1970s. He has presented his findings at state and national academic conferences, and the biographies will be published online.



Award for Excellence in Student Research Using Historical Records, Undergraduate

Ella Mortenson
Savannah College of Art and Design

Ella Mortenson delivered a presentation titled “The Historic East Side Theater: Reclaiming Savannah’s Black Entertainment History” for the Hungry for History Student Showcase hosted by the City of Savannah Municipal Archives. She first studied the theater as part of an adaptive reuse design project. She later expanded that work through digital archival research to better document the site’s role in Savannah’s Black entertainment history and community identity. Her research supports ongoing efforts to preserve sites of African American cultural expression.



Award for Excellence in Student Research Using Historical Records, Undergraduate

Hayden Reeves
Georgia Southern University

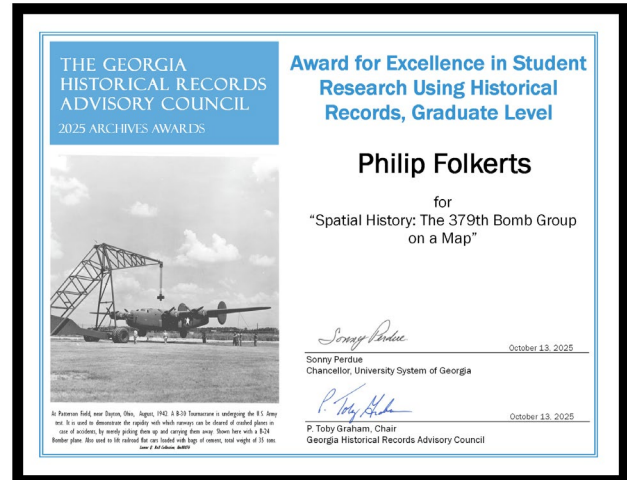
Hayden Reeves conducted research through the Sharing Stories of 1977 project, which documents delegates to the First National Women’s Conference. He produced biographies of eleven delegates from Georgia, highlighting their priorities during the women’s rights movement. Reeves used oral histories, obituaries, yearbooks, and dissertations from Georgia repositories. His work has been presented at multiple academic venues and will be featured online as part of the project’s public archive.



Award for Excellence in Student Research Using Historical Records, Graduate

Philip Folkerts
Georgia Southern University

Philip Folkerts created a digital mapping project titled “[Spatial History: The 379th Bomb Group on a Map](#),” which visualizes every combat mission flown by the 379th Bombardment Group in Europe during World War II. He used mission reports, strike photographs, and aircrew accounts to create monthly maps paired with a historical narrative. The project offers an accessible tool for exploring military operations and the experiences of the airmen who carried them out.



Award for Excellence in Student Research Using Historical Records, Graduate

Savannah Mae Tuten
Savannah College of Art and Design

Mae Tuten presented research originating from her thesis, “Visionary Art Environments: The Legacy of Laura Pope,” at the Hungry for History Student Showcase hosted by the City of Savannah Municipal Archives. Her work focuses on artist Laura Pope Forester and the preservation of Pope’s Museum in Cairo, Georgia. Tuten analyzed archival sources and visual materials to better understand the site’s significance and the preservation challenges associated with nontraditional art environments.



Award for Excellence in Student Archives-Centered Work in a Public Institution

Kennesaw State University Public History Program

Accepted by Tamara Livingston on behalf of KSU's Public History program.

Students in Dr. Jennifer Dickey's fall 2024 Introduction to Public History course at Kennesaw State University curated a traveling exhibit titled "The Fight for Civil Rights: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Foot Soldiers of the Movement." They researched Georgia participants in major civil rights campaigns using archival sources from multiple institutions. The exhibit debuted at the 2025 KSU Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast and brings attention to local contributions to civil rights history.



Award for Excellence in Student Archives-Centered Work in a Public Institution

Kennesaw State University Archives

Accepted by Amber Smith and Tamara Livingston on behalf of KSU's Archives.

The Kennesaw State University Archives is recognized for the Mountains to Metropolis Oral History Project, which expands on the long-running Thomas A. Scott Oral History Project. The archive digitized and indexed oral history recordings to ensure continued preservation and public accessibility. The new online portal supports research into the relationship between rural and urban communities in North Georgia.



Award for Excellence in Local History Advocacy

Mark Clegg

Mark Clegg authored *The Crimson and Gold*, which documents high school integration in Athens through the experiences of students and coaches involved in local football programs. His work uses archival records and interviews to examine how desegregation affected community identity and memory.



Award for Excellence in Documenting Georgia's History

Gene Kansas

Gene Kansas, author of *Civil Sights: Sweet Auburn, a Journey through Atlanta's National Treasure*, explores the contributions of the Sweet Auburn neighborhood to business, religion, and African American civic life. The book connects the neighborhood's history to ongoing preservation efforts and community storytelling.



Award for Excellence in Documenting Georgia's History

Greg Brooking, Ph.D.

Greg Brooking's biography, *From Empire to Revolution*, reassesses the leadership of James Wright, Georgia's final royal governor. Through research across several archival collections, Brooking explores the motivations and challenges of loyalists during the American Revolution and expands the understanding of Georgia's colonial governance.



Award for Excellence in Documenting Georgia's History

Glenn Robins, Ph.D.

David Robins' *In a Debt of Gratitude: How Jimmy Carter Put Veterans' Issues on the National Agenda* is a groundbreaking study of President Jimmy Carter's efforts on behalf of Vietnam veterans, both as governor of Georgia and as president. His research draws on underused archival materials to explain how Carter addressed issues faced by Vietnam veterans, including unemployment, disability claims, and recognition of service.



Award for Excellence in Documenting Georgia's History

Sarah V. Ross

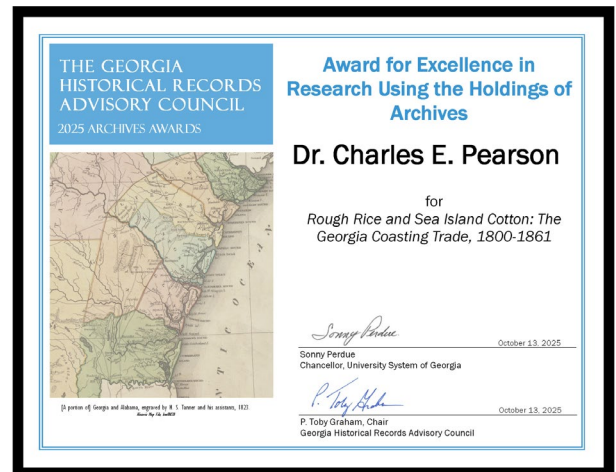
Sarah V. Ross authored *Social Roots: Lowcountry Foodways, Reconnecting the Landscape*, a study of regional culinary history that links food traditions to cultural identity and environmental context. Her research highlights diverse influences on Southern foodways and encourages a broader understanding of farm-to-table practices.



Award for Excellence in Research Using the Holdings of Archives

Charles E. Pearson, Ph.D.

Charles E. Pearson's book *Rough Rice & Sea Island Cotton: The Georgia Coasting Trade, 1800-1861*, examines the network of coastal shipping routes that supported the region's economy. He used archival research from newspapers and repositories across the Eastern United States to reconstruct trade and maritime activity before the Civil War.



Award for Excellence in Research Using the Holdings of Archives

Bradley R. Rice, Ph.D.

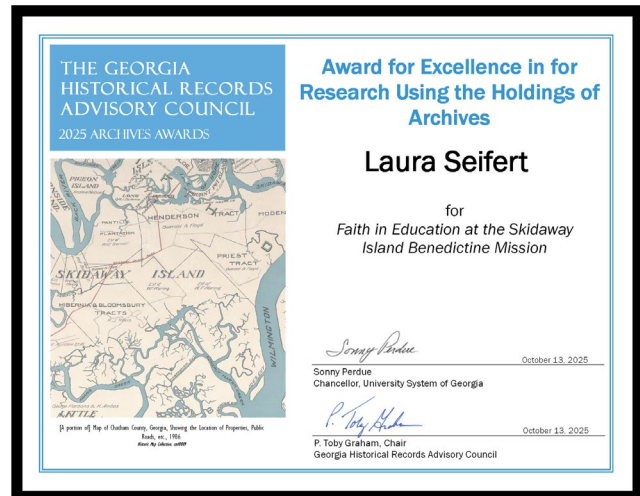
Bradley R. Rice's biography *Joshua Hill of Madison: Civil War Unionist & Georgia's First Republican Senator (1812-1891)* analyzes Hill's political choices during secession, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Combining research from several archives, Rice's work provides insight into Southern Unionism and moderation in a period of violent political conflict.



Award for Excellence in Research Using the Holdings of Archives

Laura Seifert

Laura Seifert's *Faith in Education at the Skidaway Island Benedictine Mission* examines the creation and operation of a post-Civil War educational mission on Skidaway Island. Using archival and archaeological sources, she documents how Benedictine monks and freed Black families navigated competing visions for the future through schooling, religious instruction, and community labor. Her research sheds light on how 19th century educational structures shaped long-term racial and social inequities in coastal Georgia.



Lifetime Achievement Award

Penelope Cliff

For more than thirty years, Penelope Cliff has poured her talent, energy, and conviction into expanding public access to Georgia's historical records and teaching others why that access matters. Her leadership roles at the Thomaston-Upson Archives, the Georgia Archives, and Clayton State University reflect a career defined by service to both collections and people. As an educator, she inspired students to see archives as places where stories live and history becomes a personal responsibility. As an administrator, she championed innovative preservation strategies, built enduring community partnerships, and broadened the reach of archival programs across the state.



Cliff has spent her career opening doors to the past for Georgians who might never have found those doors without her. This Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes her lasting imprint on the archival profession and the countless individuals whose understanding of history is deeper because of her work.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Sheila McAlister

Sheila McAlister's imprint on the archival landscape of Georgia is unmistakable. Through her vision and leadership of the Digital Library of Georgia, archival collections once limited to reading rooms and card catalogs became available to anyone with an internet connection. Her dedication to collaboration empowered institutions of every size to preserve and share their records, ensuring that community history is documented as faithfully as state history. She has secured major grant funding, expanded digital infrastructure, and championed equitable access to public knowledge.



McAlister's career has changed how Georgians discover and engage with the past, creating a more informed and connected future. Her legacy lives on in the millions of digital items that speak for Georgia's history and in the many professionals she has guided along the way.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Laura McCarty (posthumous)

Accepted by Mary McCartin Wearn and Phil Smith on behalf of Laura McCarty.

Laura McCarty devoted her career to strengthening the humanities and uplifting the stories that shape civic life in Georgia. From her early work supporting National History Day to her tenure as president of Georgia Humanities, she championed programs that reached into classrooms, libraries, museums, and neighborhoods across the state. Her leadership helped organizations weather challenges and continue serving their communities, including during the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. McCarty believed strongly that history and culture should be accessible to all people. She led with generosity, curiosity, and an unwavering belief in the power of education.



Her influence endures in the institutions she strengthened, the students she encouraged, and the colleagues who were fortunate to learn from her example. This posthumous recognition honors a life that made Georgia's cultural landscape more vibrant, more connected, and more humane.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Amir Jamal Toure, J.D.

Amir Jamal Touré has dedicated his life to preserving the heritage, language, and traditions of African and Gullah Geechee communities. His work as a cultural historian and educator has ensured that stories once overlooked are now honored as essential elements of Georgia's identity. Through the Geechee Kunda Cultural Center, his advocacy for historic sites, and his commitment to oral history, he has built spaces where memory is protected and pride can flourish. In the classroom, Touré encourages students to see themselves in the narrative of history and to recognize the responsibility that comes with that connection.



His leadership within the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor has raised national awareness of a culture rooted deeply in Georgia's coastal Lowcountry. This award acknowledges his enduring contributions to historical preservation, community empowerment, and the celebration of a living heritage.

Georgia Historical Records and Advisory Council

GHRAC works to promote the educational use of Georgia's documentary heritage and to support efforts to improve the condition of records statewide. The Board is charged with advising the Chancellor and the Georgia Archives on records and policy issues. Nominations for the 2026 Awards will be accepted beginning January 1, 2026, and they must be postmarked by June 1, 2026. More information is available from the Georgia Archives website: https://www.georgiaarchives.org/ghrac/awards_program.

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The Georgia Archives is a unit of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and identifies, collects, manages, preserves, and publicizes records and information of Georgia and its people and assists state and local government agencies with their records management.

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