

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA



Exploring the Past, Enriching the Future: History, Genealogy, and More at the Georgia Archives

Reflecting on the 2025 African American Genealogy & History Symposium

From January 30 to February 1, the Georgia Archives and the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS) Metro Atlanta Chapter hosted the 2025 African American Genealogy & History Symposium, a powerful three-day event celebrating African American history, culture, and genealogy. This year's symposium emphasized the Civil Rights Movement and genealogical research.

Exploring the Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement

The first two days of the symposium brought together scholars and historians to examine pivotal moments and figures in the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Kenja McCray reframed the movement through the lens of women's activism, challenging the historical interpretations that framed the era as male-led and authoritarian. Drawing from her forthcoming book, *Essential Soldiers*, she highlighted how women in cultural nationalist organizations played critical leadership roles through service-oriented activism, shaping both the movement and its legacy. Katie Mitchell, author of the upcoming book *Prose to the People: A Celebration of Black Bookstores*, traced the impact of Black-owned bookstores as centers for literacy and resistance. Dr. Robert Pratt provided a compelling discussion on Barack Obama's election and the legacy of the Voting Rights Act, while Dr. Vicki Crawford explored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s enduring influence through the lens of his "World House" philosophy and highlighted the Morehouse College Martin Luther King, Jr. Collection.

Attendees also had the opportunity to participate in an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the Georgia Archives, where they viewed original documents highlighting African American history in Georgia.



Photos courtesy of [AAHGS Metro Atlanta Chapter](#)

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A Deep Dive into African American Genealogy

Saturday's sessions were dedicated to genealogical research, offering two tracks for attendees:

- **Track One: African American Genealogy Basics Workshop** – This hands-on workshop guided participants through the foundational steps of tracing their family history, analyzing records, and organizing research findings.
- **Track Two: Exploring Genealogy** – Experts shared insights into uncovering African American lineage through Freedmen's Bureau records, WWI military service documentation, cemetery research, and oral storytelling traditions.

Watch the Sessions on YouTube!

Couldn't attend in person? We're excited to share recordings of the symposium on our [YouTube channel!](#) These presentations explore the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement and offer valuable insights into African American genealogy. Visit our channel to watch and continue the conversation.

The 2025 African American Genealogy & History Symposium was made possible by a generous grant from the Clayton County Tourism Authority. We extend our gratitude to all our speakers, attendees, and partners for making this year's event a resounding success!



Introducing *Genealogy Tidbits* with Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr.

We are excited to announce a new addition to the Georgia Archives newsletter--a dedicated genealogy column written by Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr.! Many of you recognize Mr. Thomas as the longtime genealogy columnist for *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, where he shared invaluable insights and research tips for decades.

With this new column, Mr. Thomas will bring his expertise, offering guidance on uncovering family histories, upcoming genealogy events, and exploring the genealogical resources available at the Georgia Archives. We hope this column will inspire and support your discoveries!

Genealogy Tidbits

by Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr.

Genealogy Events Calendar – March:

- **March 1:** Registration opens for the 2025 Institute of Genealogical and Historical Research (IGHR) Virtual Institute and closes on July 3, 2025. The institute will take place July 27–August 1. Learn more here: ighr.gagensociety.org/ighr-2025.
- **March 8:** The Ulster Historical Foundation Lecture at the Atlanta History Center, sponsored by the Georgia Genealogical Society. This event focuses on researching Northern Ireland records and runs from 9 am to 5 pm. Hybrid meeting. For information and registration, visit gagensociety.org.
- **March 20:** Registration deadline for DNA IGHR Course 5. The course runs from March 27 through May 8. Visit ighr.gagensociety.org/course-five/ for more information.
- **March 21–22:** Genealogy Resource Fair at Georgia Southern University, Statesboro. More details will be available soon—check the Statesboro Regional Public Libraries website (strl.info) under the “Genealogy” tab.

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Beginners' Focus:

If you are just starting out, you need to be sure to keep up with your ancestors and other research using forms like ancestral charts of your direct lines and a family group sheet, either on paper or online. You can find them in the following places:

- In the Georgia Archives Reference Room
- Online for free: search for "Family Group Sheet," "Ancestral Chart," or "Pedigree Chart."
- On Ancestry®, which offers free, downloadable [charts and forms](#).

Once you get going, you should consider posting your information in a genealogy program such as Family Tree Maker, Legacy Family Tree, or Roots Magic, all of which can interconnect with Ancestry.com and other research platforms.

Society Focus:

Georgia has a lot of genealogical societies, and I will focus on one or more in each newsletter. This newsletter's feature is the Cobb County Genealogical Society, a membership organization created in 1979, which offers:

- A winter genealogy class over several weeks.
- Monthly meetings with lectures.
- The Family Tree Quarterly publication.
- Special Interest Groups (SIGs) covering a wide range of genealogy topics, including Cobb County and beyond.

For more information, visit their website: CobbGaGenSoc.org.

DNA:

FamilyTreeDNA.com has closed its Family Tree section. Users must go to MyHeritage.com in order to update any family tree linked to their DNA results at FamilyTreeDNA.com. So, if you have not checked your DNA via this company, you need to be aware of this change from September 2024.

Website news:

The Boston Pilot newspaper, begun in 1838, has its archives for free at Boston College (newspapers.bc.edu/), but despite being a northern paper, its focus was on Irish immigrants, many of whom came to the Southeastern U.S. You can search by a specific person, or by a town, and you would be surprised what turns up. Many Irish immigrants placed advertisements in the paper looking for their lost relatives. Most times their county of origin in Ireland is referenced.

Georgia Archives Research Tidbit - Family Bibles:

You may have been coming to the Georgia Archives for decades, as I have, but there is always something that you may not know about. Bible records were copied by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) starting in the 1930s, and those copies are indexed in the DAR alcove in the Georgia Archives Reference Room library.

There are also microfilm reels in the microfilm area where family information from other great Bibles is recorded. Others could possibly be found in the Family Surname Files housed in the file cabinets in the microfilm area. The DAR also has Bible records mentioned on their website, DAR.org. Go to "Genealogy," then "Genealogy Research (GRS)," and then "GRC" where you find the tab for Bible records.

Contact Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., P. O. Box 901, Decatur, GA 30031, or email him through his website, kenthomasongenealogy.com.



Coming Up at the Georgia Archives:

March 14, 12 pm - 1 pm

Lunch & Learn: *Unspoken, The 1946 Moores Ford Lynching* by Stephanie Calabrese

April 11-12

Lunch & Learn, April History Symposium: Georgia's Waterways Featuring Sally Bethea, author of *Keeping the Chattahoochee: Reviving and Defending a Great Southern River*

May 9, 12 pm - 1 pm

Lunch & Learn: *Jimmy Carter, Citizen of the South* by Kaye Minchew

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Opportunities in Archives and Conservation

Georgia Archives Institute Now Accepting Applications

Are you looking to gain hands-on experience in archival theory and practice? The Georgia Archives Institute (GAI) is now accepting applications for its upcoming session! This intensive two-week program, held each summer at the Georgia Archives, provides participants with expert instruction in archival principles, preservation, and access, along with a one-week internship in a local repository.



Since its founding in 1967, GAI has been instrumental in training archivists, librarians, and records managers from across the country. Whether you're new to the field or looking to expand your expertise, the program offers invaluable practical experience in archival work.

For those interested in attending, the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council (GHRAC) offers a GAI Stipend to help offset the cost of tuition. This stipend is available to Georgia residents or those working with Georgia-based archival collections, providing crucial support for individuals committed to preserving the state's documentary heritage. More information about the stipend can be found at GeorgiaArchives.org.

Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your archival skills! For more details and to apply to the Georgia Archives Institute, visit GeorgiaArchivesInstitute.org.

Pre-Program Conservation Internship at the Georgia Archives Now Accepting Applications

The Georgia Archives is now accepting applications for its Pre-Program Conservation Internship, an excellent opportunity for students pursuing a career in conservation. This hands-on internship provides practical experience in preservation techniques, collections care, and conservation treatments under the guidance of professional conservators.

Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree in conservation, art history, library science, engineering, or a related field and be working toward a postgraduate degree in conservation. The program is designed to offer emerging professionals real-world experience in document and materials conservation, helping to prepare them for advanced study and future careers in the field.

For more information and to apply, visit GeorgiaArchives.org.

From the Vault: Georgia Power's Lighting Installations Collection

The Georgia Archives' Georgia Power Lighting Installations Collection offers a striking visual record of 1930s and 1940s commercial photography, showcasing how electric lighting transformed businesses across Georgia. With 305 black-and-white images, this collection captures dramatic before-and-after shots of storefronts, restaurants, theaters, and more—many originally published in *Bright Spots*, Georgia Power's magazine. These photographs not only document mid-century business life but also highlight the artistry of lighting design. View the collection on the Georgia Archives [Virtual Vault](#).

