

# Reflections



Georgia African American  
Historic Preservation Network

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## EVANS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL: THE CORE OF A COMMUNITY

*Kayla Morris, African American Programs Assistant  
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Evans County High School, also known as Evans County Training School, which is situated off of Church Street in Claxton, Ga., was established as an Equalization School in the 1950s. Equalization schools are schools created after the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. In the 1950s Georgia Governor Herman E. Talmadge set aside funds to build these schools throughout the state to ensure that separate but equal was followed as to prevent the integration of schools in Georgia.

Evans County High School educated African American students in this small Georgia town until the integration of schools was complete in 1971. The school was used as Claxton Junior High School and then Claxton Middle School, before the Alumni of Evans County High School purchased the campus. The school now houses community service organizations such as the Red Cross and a day care center.

Jeanne Cyriaque, former African American Programs Coordinator for the Georgia Historic Preservation Division, recently visited Evans County High School, where she met with some of the school's alumni. The visit included a discussion about what interested members of a community can do to preserve the history of Equalization schools and the process of placing a site on the National Register of Historic Places. Several ideas for a new building use were given, including the creation of a museum and housing for other organizations in the community. Creating a partnership with the

local parks and recreation department, in order to help with the maintenance of the school, was also discussed.

Evans County High School's large campus is reminiscent of most Equalization schools with its cafetorium (a room that served the purpose of cafeteria and auditorium), large gymnasium, restrooms that students accessed on the exterior of the building's wings, and the school's association with the name Evans County Technical School. It was common for black secondary schools to be referred to as technical schools to distinguish the black schools from the white schools in a community. The school currently houses many photographs and other memorabilia from the Alumni of Evans County High School. The enthusiasm that Alumni have shown about revitalizing their school and learning as much as they can to continue the legacy of the school, shows the importance Evans County High School had on the black community in Evans County.



*Evans County High Gymnasium  
Photo Courtesy Kayla Morris*

Many of the stories and documents associated with the school were recorded by Gail Drake Dismuke, who wrote the dissertation "The Solid Rock: An Oral History of the Events Preceding the Disappearance of One Southern Rural African American School in Evans County, Georgia 1954-1971." Dismuke's dissertation makes reference to the school's newspaper *The Longhorn Moo*, the athletic teams, and the clubs that were active on the campus. With the oral histories of both alumni and teachers of Evans County High School, this dissertation tells the story of an Equalization school that educated the black community

# EVANS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL: THE CORE OF A COMMUNITY

Kayla Morris, continued from page 1



Exterior of Evans County High School's main building.  
Photo Courtesy of Kayla Morris

in Evans County, Ga., for almost two decades before integration.

Evans County High School, like other Equalization schools, was created by the consolidation of all African American schools in the county. Some students who lived on the outskirts of town began their education at smaller schools. Most alumni of the school have positive memories of their times at ECHS, including the love they received from their teachers. Many of the students went on to gain a college education and to become educators and other professionals. Evans County High School's story is a positive one. It is a school that was the core of the community, and still seems to be.

To learn more on Equilization schools visit:  
[www.georgiashpo.org/historic/african\\_american#schools](http://www.georgiashpo.org/historic/african_american#schools)



Longhorn Memorabilia  
Photo Courtesy of Kayla Morris



The "cafetorium" both mascots of the school before and after desegregation are present on the back wall of the cafeteria. Before desegregation, Evans County High School was known as the Longhorns.

Photo Courtesy of Kayla Morris

## Evans County High Alma Mater

(Sung to the tune of Brahms' Lullaby)

E.C. High we sing of thee;  
To thee we pay homage;  
We will ever be true,  
As our precepts pursue.

We will ever glorify;  
Our dear Evans County High,  
We will ever glorify,  
Our dear Evans County High

E.C. High we sing of thee;  
As our hearts pant with glee,  
Faithful to our every call,  
We will never let thee fall.

To thee we'll be nigh  
Our dear Evans County High,  
To thee we'll be nigh,  
Our dear Evans County High

From Gail Drake Dismuke's "The Solid Rock"



## CYRUS G. WILEY: REMEMBERING A DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR

*Kayla Morris, African American Programs Assistant  
Historic Preservation Division*

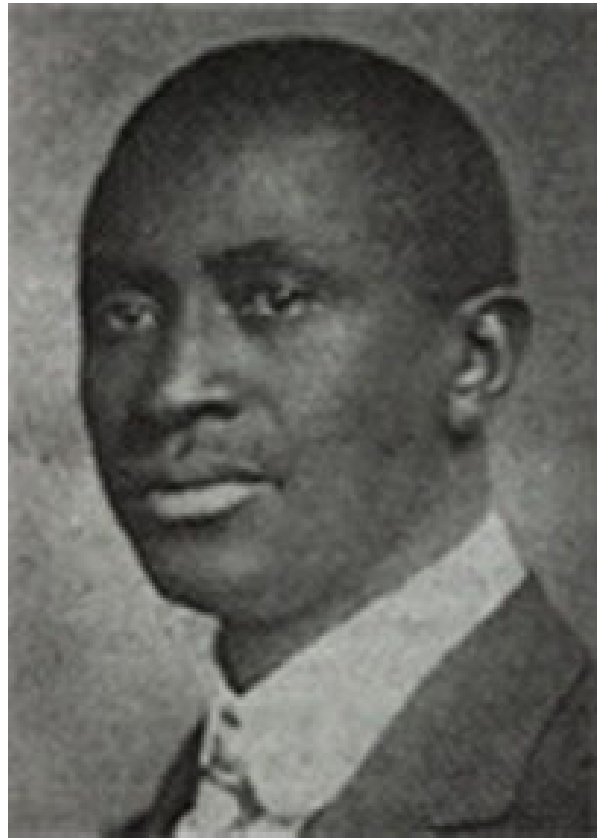
Cyrus Gilbert Wiley was born August 13, 1881 on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wiley. After attaining the highest level education possible on Hilton Head, Wiley received both his high school and college education at Georgia State Industrial College for Colored Youth. This school was located in Savannah, and is now known as Savannah State University. After completing his education in 1902, Wiley moved to Valdosta where he became a notable educator. In Valdosta Wiley served as principal of the Magnolia School for fifteen years. During his time as an educator there, Wiley received the respect of both black and white citizens for his commitment to students.

In 1921 Wiley became the second president of the Georgia State Industrial College and was the first alumnus to do so. Prior to being appointed president by the Board of Commissioners, Wiley taught Mathematics at Georgia State Industrial College for a year. During his time as president of Georgia State Industrial College, Wiley was the first leader of the college to admit female boarding students. He proposed the building of a female dormitory and began a project to get the community involved in funding the construction.

Wiley also promoted agricultural education; the school became a federal agricultural extension center during his tenure there. With the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, that promoted vocational education with federal funds, the Wiley administration took advantage of available funds and created not only a four-year program in vocational agriculture, but allowed students to have a split curriculum of both traditional subjects such as history, mathematics, and English while having access to the vocational agriculture program. Wiley supported the efforts of agriculture students by highlighting an outstanding student at each of the Annual Farmers Conference's held at the college. These students would be asked to present their work to attendees of the conference.

At the end of his presidency in the summer of 1926, Wiley became a pastor at St. Paul A.M.E in Macon, Ga., while serving as a dean of a satellite school of Morris Brown College. In the following years, Wiley would become pastor of Big Bethel A.M.E Church in Atlanta and would pass away in January of 1930. Wiley was buried in Sunset Hill Cemetery in Valdosta, Ga., and according to Valdosta newspapers his funeral service was attended by both blacks and whites who were friends of Wiley.

Wiley and his legacy are still remembered today by those who were touched by his dedication to education. The "Cyrus G. Wiley Distinguished Alumni Award" was named after Wiley in 1974 and is given annually by Savannah State University. The Savannah State University gymnasium also bears his name as the Wilcox-Wiley Physical Education Complex built in 1954. Cyrus Wiley was well respected in the communities where he served; with his involvement in the education of black students in Georgia, he quickly became a pillar in those communities.



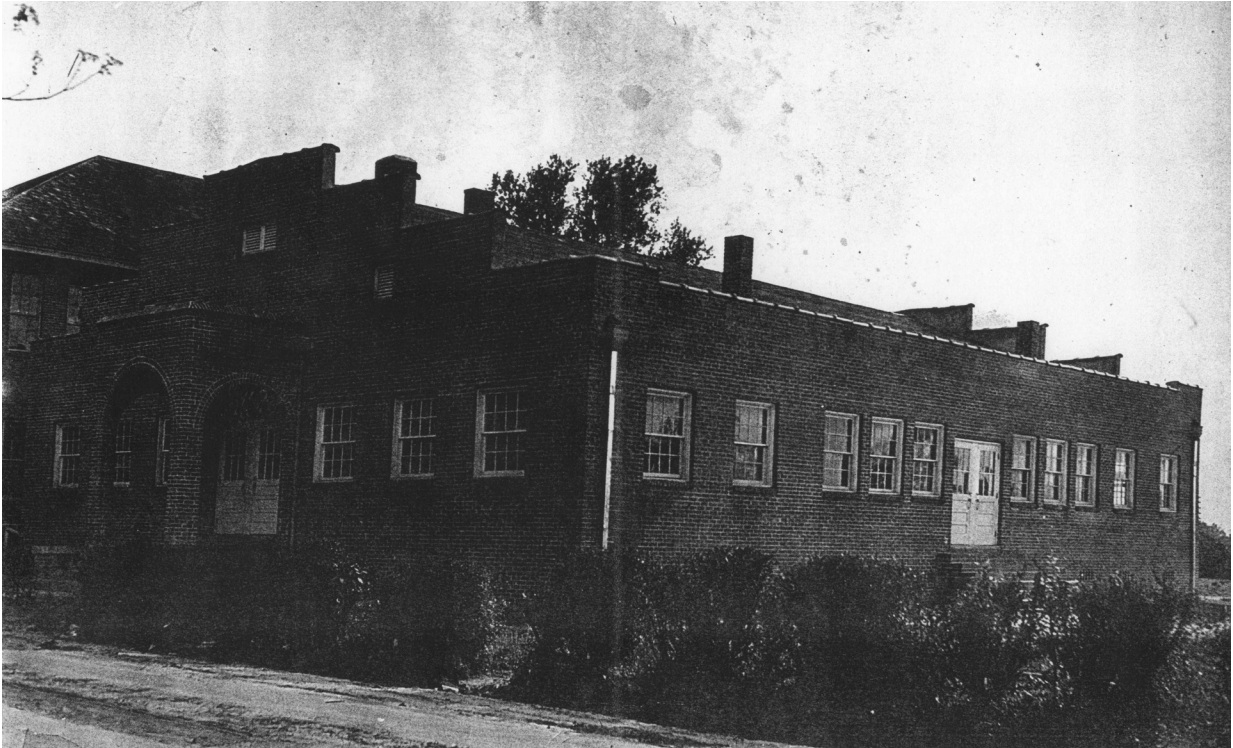
*Cyrus G. Wiley, Portrait located at Savannah State University.  
Photo provided by Savannah State University, Archives.*



*Wilcox-Wiley Gymnasium, Savannah State University.  
Photo provided by Jeanne Cyriaque*

## CYRUS G. WILEY: REMEMBERING A DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR

*Kayla Morris, continued from page 3*



*Exterior of the Magnolia School. Photo provided by Valdosta State University.*



*Magnolia School where Wiley was principal. Photo provided by the Lowndes County Historical Society.*



## PRESIDENT OF THE ALBANY MOVEMENT: WILLIAM GILCHRIST ANDERSON

*Kayla Morris, African American Programs Assistant  
Historic Preservation Division*

William Anderson born on December 12, 1927 in Americus, Ga., would become a leader of a movement in southern Georgia. Anderson who graduated high school and enrolled at the age of 15 at Fort Valley State College (now Fort Valley State University) in 1942, was a successful student. At Fort Valley, Anderson was pre-med. As a result of World War II, his studies were interrupted, and he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. When Anderson returned home, he married a Fort Valley classmate, Norma Lee Dixon, and moved to Atlanta. There, Anderson attended the Atlanta College of Mortuary Science and completed his studies in 1947. Anderson and Norma Lee then moved to Montgomery, Ala., where he worked in a black funeral home and attended night classes at Alabama State College. Here, Anderson befriended Ralph Abernathy, who would become involved in the Albany Movement that Anderson would later lead. Anderson eventually returned to Atlanta, where he works as an educator at the Atlanta College of Mortuary Science and at Booker T. Washington High School. While in Atlanta Anderson forged a friendship with Martin Luther King, Jr. Anderson still had the drive to pursue a career in the field of medicine; Anderson attended the Des Moines Still College of Osteopathy in Iowa and received his degree in 1956.

and Martin Luther King, Jr., with the movement in Albany. Though the Albany Movement was later viewed as unsuccessful, it is believed that it did help in getting many black voters registered and gave other neighboring communities the idea to begin their own protests.

After his involvement with the Albany Movement, Anderson was appointed the first black surgical resident in Detroit's (Mich) Art Centre Hospital in 1964; he also led a group surgical practice in Detroit until 1984. Anderson held the positions of the chairman of the American Osteopathic Association's (AOA) Department of Education Affairs, associate clinical professor at the Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine, and associate dean of the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Missouri. Anderson was also the first African American to serve as president of the AOA in 1994, after he served on the AOA board of directors for eighteen years. William Anderson's story is not only one of resilience and tenacity, but of desire to lead a purposeful movement unselfishly. Anderson fulfilled his dream of working in medicine and he helped open doors for people of color in Southern Georgia.



*William Anderson on Meet the Press to defend the actions of protestors. Photo Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.*

Anderson eventually settled in Albany, Ga., and expanded his practice to include the area's only black-owned drug store. He quickly joined the black elite of Albany, who would soon encounter the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that inspired the black residents of Albany to push for racial equality. SNCC was already involved in sit-ins and protests to desegregate the bus station in Albany, but the black leaders in town elected Anderson as president of the local movement based on his position and ability to run his business without the support of white businesses in town. Anderson requested the assistance of his friends Ralph Abernathy



*L-R, Martin Luther King Jr., William G. Anderson, and Ralph Abernathy. Photo Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division*

## A TRUE WOMAN OF DISTINCTION: BAZOLINE USHER

Kayla Morris, African American Programs Assistant  
Historic Preservation Division

While we are reflecting on the significance of Black history and the influence black people have had in this country, we cannot forget to highlight those who have helped guide in a new generation of leaders, inventors, and innovators: the educators. Without those who sought to teach, the future would have been bleak; teaching requires not only a love for education but a drive to shape the minds of the future. Bazoline Usher was born in 1885 in Walton County, Ga., to Joe and Lavada Usher, who quickly noticed their daughter's intellect when she began to succeed in school. Usher's family moved to Atlanta so Bazoline could attend Atlanta University's high school program.

Usher, who eventually went on to receive her Master's in Education, in 1937, from Atlanta University, had a love for learning. She began teaching, in 1906, in Virginia and returned to teach in Atlanta, in 1915. She held the assistant principal position at Booker T. Washington High School and then served as principal of David T. Howard Grammar School in 1929. She maintained the principal



*Exhibit of District V at the Greater Atlanta Girl Scouts Headquarters in Mableton, GA*

*Photo by Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta*



*Bazoline Usher*

*Photo Courtesy of Georgia Women of Achievement*

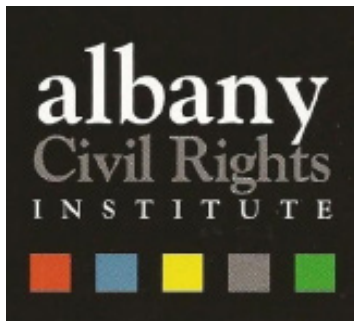
position until 1943. Soon after leaving her position as principal, Usher created black Girl Scout troops with the recruitment of black troop leaders; more than 100 black girls joined in four black troops located in Atlanta. These troops were known as District V.

For Black History Month, the Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta's Headquarters, located in Mableton, Ga. created an exhibit called "In The Lives of District V- The Untold Story of Atlanta's First African-American Girl Scout Troops." Bazoline Usher, who was nominated for Georgia's Women of Achievement award in 2014, is truly an example of black excellence, with her passion and dedication to education and the betterment of black children. Most recently the Trustees of Georgia Women of Achievement hosted its 25th Annual Induction Ceremony, on Wednesday, March 9, 2016, at Pierce Chapel on Wesleyan College's Macon campus. A luncheon was held after the ceremony and the keynote speaker was May Van Wagenen, a 17-year-old teen author!

Bazoline Usher worked hard and became not just a great and memorable educator, but a mother-figure to many. She never married or had children of her own, as the times required female teachers be single in order to remain employed. Surely she left her stamp in Georgia history as a significant individual who worked tirelessly for her community. Those whose lives were touched by Usher, without question, consider themselves blessed.

To learn more about Bazoline Usher, visit Georgia Women of Achievement: <http://georgiawomen.org/2014/04/usher-bazoline/>

## UPCOMING EVENTS



Freedom Singers  
of Albany  
Albany, Georgia  
2nd Saturday of Each  
Month

On the second Saturday of each month, the Albany Civil Rights Institute hosts the Freedom Singers who perform songs that helped keep up the spirits of the participants of the Civil Rights Movement. To learn more, visit:

[http://albanycivilrightsinsitute.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=22&Itemid=25](http://albanycivilrightsinsitute.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22&Itemid=25)



20th Annual Pan African  
Festival of Georgia  
Macon, Georgia  
April 22-24, 2016

The Tubman Museum is hosting their 20th Annual Pan African Festival of Georgia in April. This festival features live performances, a market-place where African-inspired goods will be sold, along with both Caribbean and Soul food. This event is family friendly and will celebrate African influences. To learn more, visit:

[http://www.tubmanmuseum.com/events\\_items/pan-african-festival/](http://www.tubmanmuseum.com/events_items/pan-african-festival/)



Golf Tournament for Lucy  
Craft Laney Museum  
Augusta, Georgia  
May 21, 2016

The first annual Golf Tournament will be hosted this year; the proceeds from this event will go to the Lucy Craft Laney Museum located in Augusta, Georgia. Lucy Craft Laney was an education leader in Georgia during the late 19th century. For more information, visit:

<http://www.lucycraftlaneymuseum.com/events.htm>



The Gathering at Geechee Kunda  
Riceboro, Georgia  
April 16, 2016

The Gathering at Geechee Kunda is a celebration of dance, music, food and much more to honor the Gullah Geechee way of life. The event features presentations, performances, demonstrations, and a market for arts, crafts, and cuisine! This family friendly festival is free and open to the public.

[www.exploregeorgia.org/listing/9769-gathering-at-geechee-kunda](http://www.exploregeorgia.org/listing/9769-gathering-at-geechee-kunda)



## ABOUT REFLECTIONS

Since its first issue appeared in December 2000, *Reflections* has documented hundreds of Georgia's African American historic resources. Now, all of these articles are available on the Historic Preservation Division website [www.georgiashpo.org](http://www.georgiashpo.org). Search for links to your topic by categories: cemeteries, churches, districts, farms, lodges, medical, people, places, schools, and theatres. You can now subscribe to *Reflections* from the homepage. *Reflections* is a recipient of a *Leadership in History Award* from the American Association for State and Local History.



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Historic Preservation Network

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## ABOUT GAAHPN



Georgia African American  
Historic Preservation Network

The Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN) was established in January 1989. It is composed of representatives from neighborhood organizations and preservation groups. GAAHPN was formed in response to a growing interest in preserving the cultural and built diversity of Georgia's African American heritage. This interest has translated into a number of efforts which emphasize greater recognition of African American culture and contributions to Georgia's history. The GAAHPN Steering Committee plans and implements ways to develop programs that will foster heritage education, neighborhood revitalization, and support community and economic development. The Network is an informal group of more than 3,000 people who have an interest in preservation. Members are briefed on the status of current and planned projects, and are encouraged to offer ideas, comments and suggestions. The meetings provide an opportunity to share and learn from the preservation experience of others, and to receive technical information through workshops. Members receive a newsletter, *Reflections*, produced by the Network. Visit the Historic Preservation Division website at [www.georgiashpo.org](http://www.georgiashpo.org). Preservation information and previous issues of *Reflections* are available online. Membership in the Network is free and open to all.

## Reflections

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Kayla Morris, Editor

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