

Heritage 2026



Honoring our past.
Celebrating the present.
Welcoming the future.

March 2026

A special publication of **GORDON**
Gazette

HERITAGE 2026

INDEX:

W. Laurens Hillhouse.....	3A
Yellow Jacket Drive-In.....	6A
Gordon County Sheriff’s Office.....	7A
Larry Gibson.....	9A
GNTC.....	10A
Calhoun Women’s Center.....	12A
Georgia String Band Festival.....	14A
Vitruvian-Hamilton Medical.....	17-18A
Liberty Cumberland Presbyterian Church.....	20A

ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS!

Ted Bowers, MD

Board-Certified Family Medicine Physician



Hamilton Health – Calhoun welcomes Ted Bowers, MD, a board-certified family medicine physician committed to delivering trusted, comprehensive primary care focused on prevention, wellness, and long-term health.

Dr. Bowers provides comprehensive primary care for children and adults, caring for patients at every stage of life — from routine wellness visits to managing complex chronic conditions. He emphasizes preventive medicine, patient education, and long-term relationships built on trust. His goal is to partner with patients to help them stay healthy, manage ongoing conditions, and improve overall quality of life.

Originally from Blue Ridge, Georgia, Dr. Bowers graduated summa cum laude with highest honors from the University of Georgia before earning his medical degree at the Medical College of Georgia on a faculty-sponsored academic scholarship. He completed his Family Medicine residency at Self Regional Hospital, where he served as Chief Resident. Dr. Bowers is board certified by the American Board of Family Medicine.

706.529.3025
215 Curtis Pkwy NE, Calhoun
VitruvianHealth.com/calhoun



Hamilton Health - Calhoun
Vitruvian Health

Celebrating W. Laurens Hillhouse

Brandi Owczarz
staff@gordongazettega.com

Riding down many side streets in the city limits of Calhoun, there are many beautiful and historical rock walls around homes, a church and a graveyard.

William Laurens Hillhouse contributed much to the rich history of Gordon County. He was born in late July 1861 in South Carolina, and arrived in the area at the age of 12, in 1873, the son of the Rev. Joseph B. and Esther Love Steele Hillhouse. According to the “1976 Bicentennial History of Gordon County,” the Hillhouse family settled on a farm just across the river bridge on Sugar Valley Road/Highway 136.

In 1877, Hillhouse graduated from the Calhoun Academy then went on to study at Princeton University, the first person from a Calhoun family to attend an Ivy League University.

He returned to his home town and became a building contractor and in his later life was a nurseryman. Many of the large oaks which adorn the streets of Calhoun he planted; never having been married, these were his “children.” He also took an active interest in the city government and in 1895 became the first elected Mayor of Calhoun when the first municipal waterworks were built.

He basically two separate careers, first as a successful builder and nurseryman, and second as an industrial missionary to the Belgian Congo Free State in West Africa. Having amassed some wealth, he decided at age 52 to offer his services and to pay his own way as a missionary under the Presbyterian Church. He was in the Congo a total of 10 years, from 1913-19 and again from 1921-25. On his way there he carried letters to the Belgian Government at Brussels and was given a grant of 100 hectares to be used for experimentation with cotton culture.

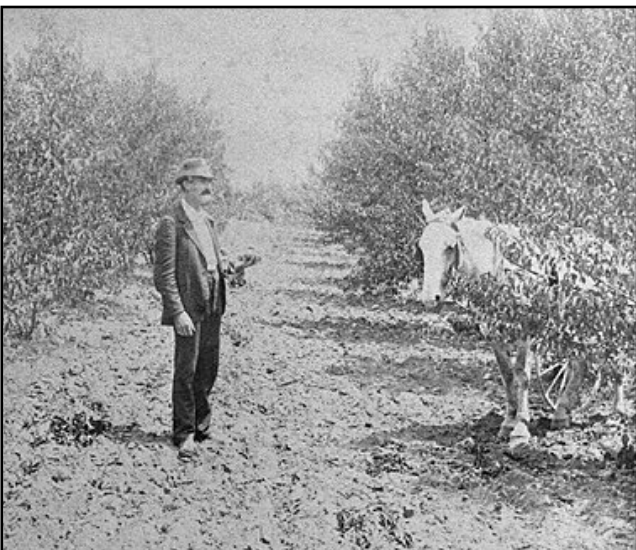
His major contributions, however, were in building brick churches and schools, in teaching the natives the art of brick making, and introducing to the area new varieties of fruit trees and vegetables. He also made the first baking ovens for the missionaries.

On his return in 1919 he built the stone Presbyterian Church at Calhoun on Trammel Street, now St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church. The building is the oldest continuously occupied house of Christian worship in Gordon County. Hillhouse had constructed his own home in 1907. He also constructed the Hillhouse Rock Wall that stands along Wall Street in front of the Calhoun City Schools’ Central Office. After his return in 1925, he built some buildings for the mountain mission school at Macoochee in North Georgia, for the Martha Berry School in Rome, a stone chapel over the grave of Cora Harris (author of “The Circuit Rider’s Wife”) at her former home, “In the Valley,” in Bartow County on the Pine Log Creek, and a chapel at the Chandler Cemetery. For a time he also continued his nursery business.

William Laurens Hillhouse died at the age of 89 on April 1, 1951, in the Johnston-Hall Hospital in



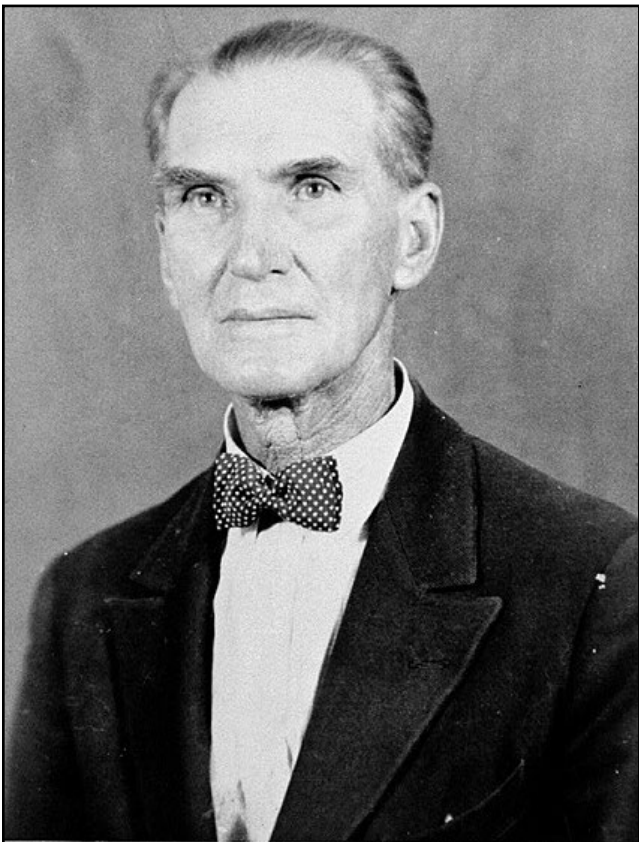
ABOVE: W. Laurens Hillhouse (1861-1951) posing at a rock wall that he built. Heserved as the first mayor of Calhoun. He also was a Presbyterian missionary to Africa, a rock and brick mason, and a contractor. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



ABOVE: Calhoun, 1892. W. Laurens Hillhouse and his mule named Knox standing in the Harbin peach orchard. This area is now the residential section of Hillcrest Drive. Hillhouse helped with the construction of the Gordon County Courthouse which was completed in 1889, the Calhoun National Bank (1892), a memorial to honor Civil War and World War I soldiers (ca. 1927), a statue of Sequoyah, Calhoun Presbyterian Church (1921), a fountain located near the Calhoun Woman's Club cabin (1910), as well as numerous homes located in and around Calhoun. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



ABOVE: The home that W. Laurens Hillhouse built in 1907 still stands today on Trammell Street.



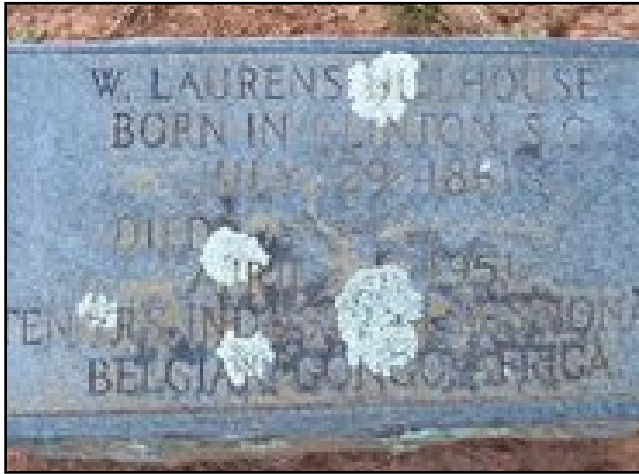
ABOVE: Calhoun, 1950. W. Laurens Hillhouse (1861-1951) served as the first mayor of Calhoun. He also was a presbyterian missionary to Africa, a rock and brick mason, and a contractor. Hillhouse died in 1951 at the age of 89 due to injuries sustained in a fall.

downtown Calhoun from injuries sustained in a fall a week earlier.



LEFT: The rock church on Trammel Street build by W. Laurens Hillhouse in 1919/1920. It was previously a Presbyterian church. It now serves as St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church.

RIGHT: The Memorial Arch and Sequoyah Statue, both commissioned by the Calhoun Woman’s Clu. The arch and the base of the Sequoyah statue were built by W. Laurens



ABOVE: The grave os W. Laurens Hillhouse in Chandler Cemetery in Calhoun.

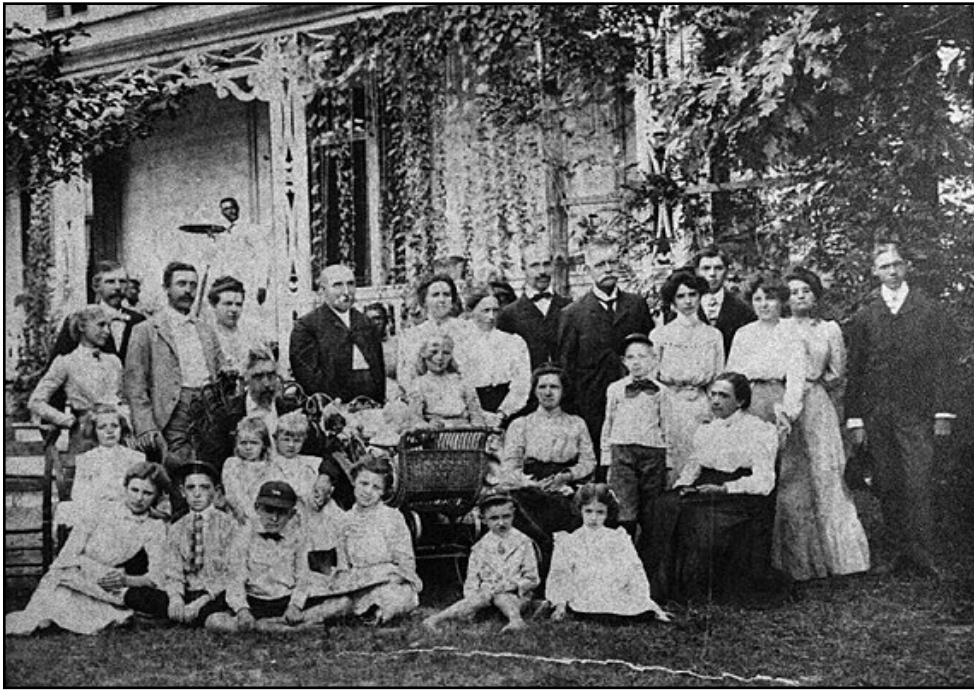
Gordon County through the years



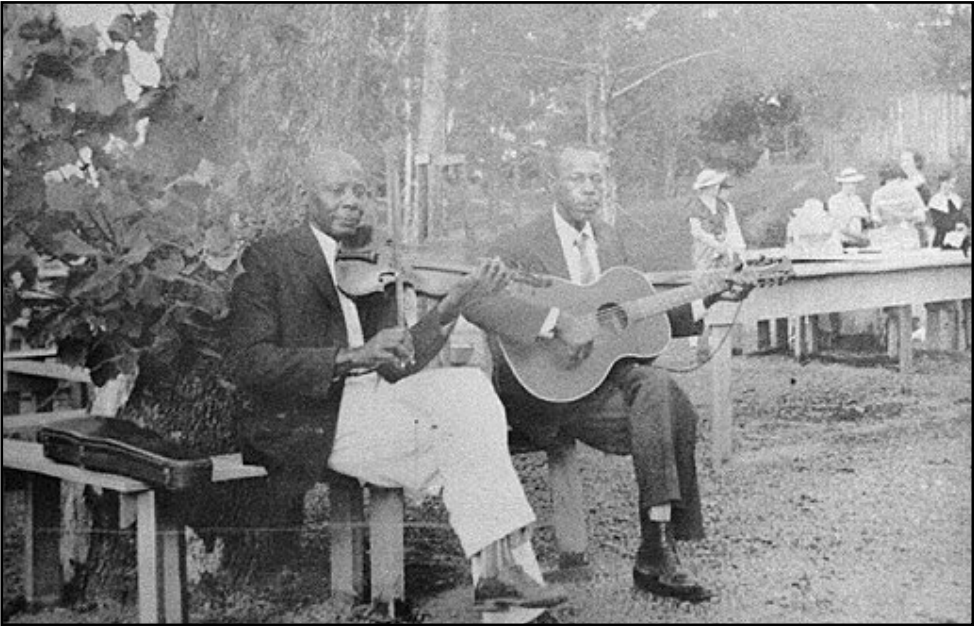
1918 Street Paving in Calhoun: Workers in the process of paving Court and North Wall Streets. Note the machinery at the left. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



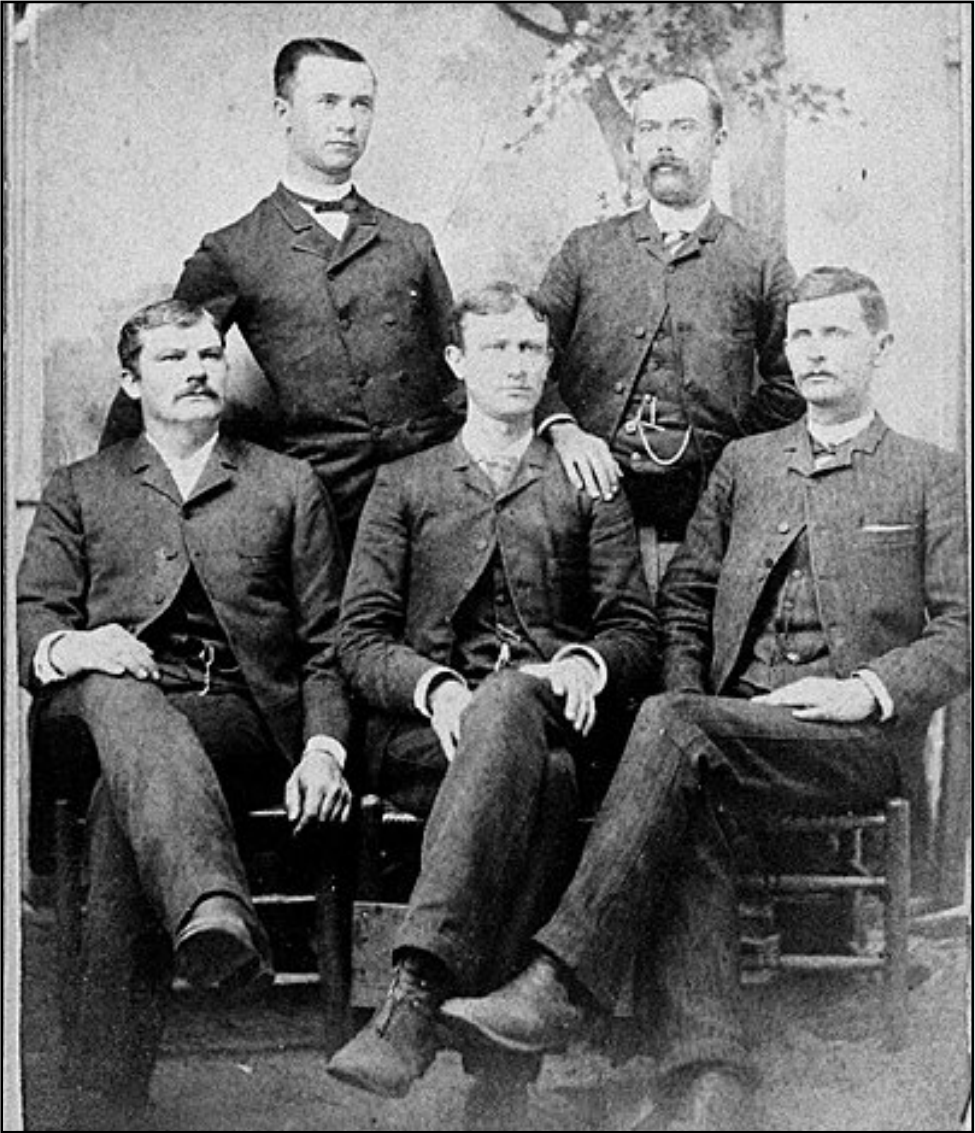
Gentlemen's Park, winter 1927: View of Gentlemen's Park. The iron fountain in the park was melted down to help in the World War II effort. The park has been replaced by a city parking lot. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Harlan House 1903: Home of James Monroe Harlan was built in 1869. It was called "Forest Home" and is located east of Calhoun on Ga. Highway 225. Mr. Harlan (seated) is seen in front of the home with members of the family. Mr. Harlan (1827-1905) served Gordon County as a Judge of the Interior Court and was a member of the Board of County Commissioners. In addition to his plantation, he maintained a mercantile establishment. The A. R. McDaniel family occupies his home now. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Baxter's Orchestra - Calhoun, 1935: Baxter's Orchestra. Andrew Baxter (left) and his son, Jim (right) entertaining at a Rotary summer party. They played at many functions in the area over a period of many years. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Calhoun City Council 1889: Members of the Calhoun City Council pose for a photograph. Standing, left to right: James A. Hall, Chairman; O.C. Ingram. Sitting: W. M. Hughey, Logan Robert Pitts, W. D. Fain. Mr. Hall served as Chairman, which corresponded to mayor. This photograph was taken by W. H. Wilson who was located in Dalton, Ga. at the time the photograph was taken. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Chastain Brothers Drug Store, Calhoun, ca. 1906-1907: Interior of Chastain Brothers Drugstore located at the corner of Court Street and Park Avenue. It was operated by Alonzo and Ben Chastain. Note the signs and the soda fountain. Later names for this same firm are Chastain & Orr Drug Co., Chastain & Morris Drugstore, and Calhoun Drug Co. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



William Rankin Norton -Gordon County, ca. 1920: William Rankin Norton (1915-1971) poses for a photograph beside a toy automobile large enough to ride in. He was the son of King Norton and Mary Belle Rankin Norton. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Public Schools on College Street - Calhoun, ca. 1920. Public schools located on College Street. The two-story brick building at the left was completed in 1903. It served students in grades 1-9, the only grades offered at that time. By 1913 the number of grades had increased to 11. In 1917 a three-story brick structure, seen at the right, was erected as Calhoun High School. In 1937 the high school moved into a new facility on Oothcaloga Street. In 1974 the First Baptist Church acquired the College Street property. The buildings were demolished to make way for a new building for the First Baptist Church which was completed in 1976.

Gordon County through the years



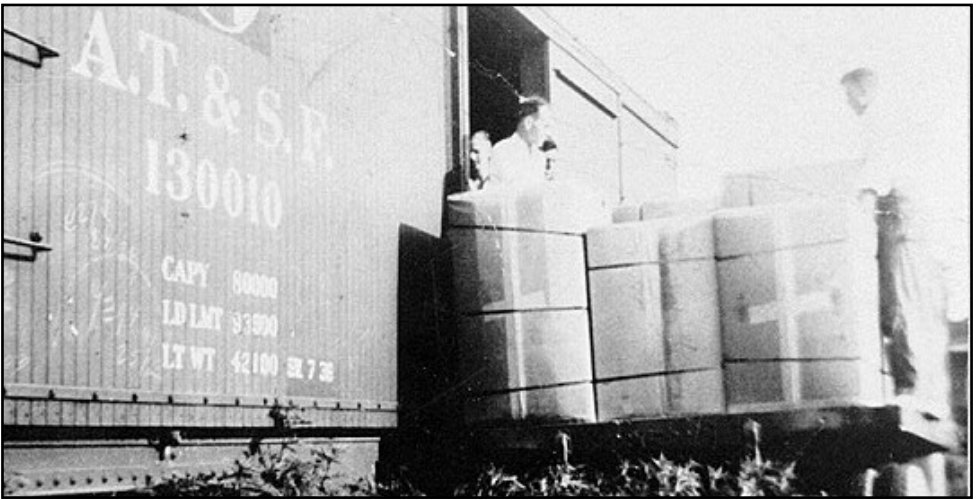
Gordon County, ca. 1880's-1890's. Unidentified men in front of the Oothcaloga Mill which was located on Oothcaloga Creek on Ga. Highway 53 west of Calhoun. It was built ca. 1850 by J.P. King. Over the years it had many owners. The mill may have survived the Civil War. If it was damaged it was rebuilt. Data on this point is unclear. In later years the mill was known as Coley's Mill and Logan's Mill reflecting its owner. About 1955 the mill was demolished.(Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



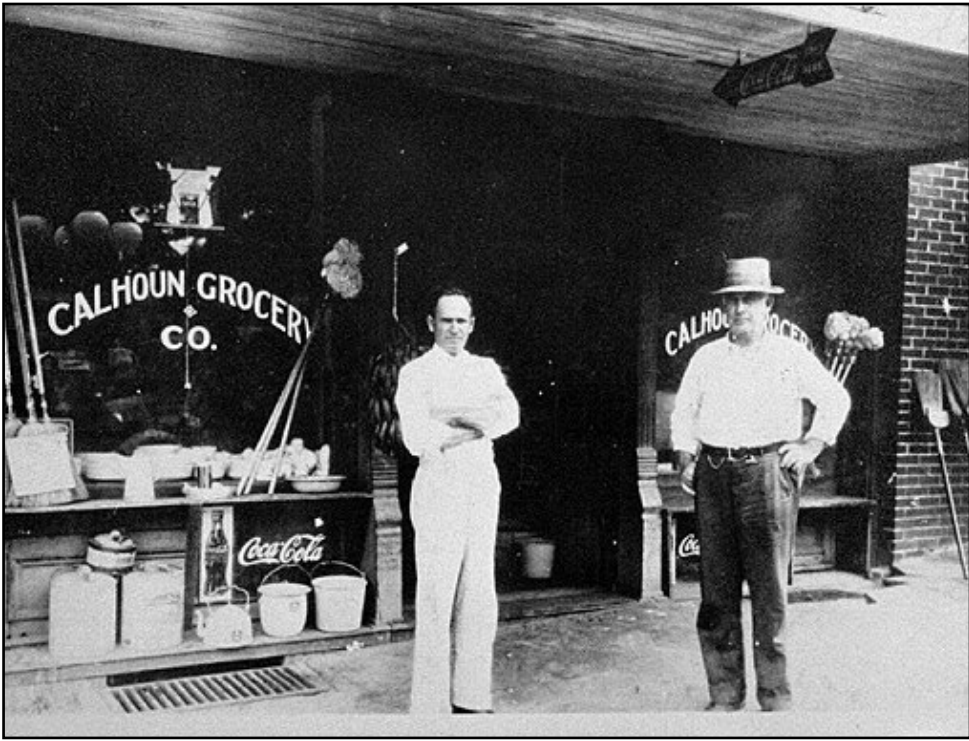
Calhoun, Sept. 1924. Miss Tommie Edwards, a telephone operator, seen at work at the telephone exchange located on South Wall Street. Note switchboard and light fixtures. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Calhoun, 1915. Interior of Oothcalooga Depot. Will Brown, seated at front right, was the railroad agent. Other employees are also pictured. The depot was served by the Western & Atlantic Railroad. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Calhoun, 1944. Men loading chenille textile products onto a train at the Oothcaloga Depot. These products were manufactured in Gordon County and were shipped to other locations for sale. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Calhoun, 1945. Calhoun Grocery Company located on East Court Street. Shown are J.W. Phillips, the proprietor, and Sam Boston. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Calhoun, 1976. Seventh-Day Adventist Church. It was begun in 1948. The church moved to this new building located on West Belmont Drive in early 1976, then into a building that it remains in on Hwy. 53 West/Rome Road. This building is now North Georgia National Bank.(Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Calhoun, 1945. Miller Motor Company. Signs advertise tires and batteries. The sign in the window appears to indicate that General Motors products were sold there. Left to right: Bill Owen, Norman Miller, Sr., Norman Miller, Jr., Claude Watts.(Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Calhoun, 1935. Hotel Rooker located on North Wall Street was built in 1935. It was operated by members of the Rooker family. An earlier Hotel Rooker had been located one block west of the Oothcaloga Depot. This building is now the Harris Arts Center. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)

Serving Generations of Gordon County

The Yellow Jacket Drive-In as been the go-to for good food and good memories for decades

Brandi Owczarz
staff@gordongazettega.com

What started out as Dari-King in the late 1950's on the west side of Calhoun, the Yellow Jacket Drive-In, located at 801 Oothcalooga Street, has been a staple of good food, good folks and good memories for more than 60 years.

"The Yellow Jacket was first Dari- King for around the first four years; legend has it that a new owner came in and changed the name to The Yellow Jacket to reflect all of the students from Calhoun High School that visited before and after school," said Ben.

According to Gordon County property tax records, the property first belonged to the Calhoun Housing Authority. In the early 1960's, the property was purchased by Wesley Latta, Jr., from Rome, who ran it as the Dari-King and at some point during his ownership, the name changed to Yellow Jacket Drive-In.

In 1983, beloved Calhoun businessman Paul Chang and his wife, Linda, fulfilled a dream of self-employment by taking ownership of the Yellow Jacket Drive-In. The establishment was a cherished gathering place for locals, a testament to Paul's dedication to fostering relationships within the community. For 34 years, he served meals and a sense of belonging to all who entered the doors of the restaurant.

In 2017, Paul sold The Yellow Jacket to Calhoun native Ben Bushong and his wife, Missy, who have painstakingly worked to keep the same great food quality and fast, friendly customer service as the restaurant always provided, but updating and expanding to provide even more to their patrons.

"The opportunity came up for the purchase of The Yellow Jacket, and I always wanted to own a restaurant, and my background with the Waffle House helped me develop this small business efficiently," said Ben.

Ben Bushong

worked at Waffle House for almost 10 years in the Canton-Woodstock area as a district manager, overseeing three stores. His proficiency in running those stores was noticed and recognized by many. The Calhoun High School alum was looking to run his own business and the sale of The Yellow Jacket was the perfect way to accomplish that, while returning home to his roots.

"I was the one that pushed him," said Missy of the decision to purchase the Yellow Jacket.

The decision quickly paid off.

According to Ben, the couple worked heavily on marketing, relying on Missy's savvy in social media to promote The Yellow Jacket. The couple also worked establishing connections and relationships within the community, such as providing meals for the Calhoun Yellow Jackets before home games on Friday nights and catering meals for FCA banquets. The Yellow Jacket also feeds members of the local American Legion once each month.

Missy also worked hard with getting reviews from customers on Google and Trip Advisor, which she says has helped greatly.

With an exceptional team, the hard work and marketing paid off in 2023 when The Yellow Jacket was featured as one of the Top 10 Burger Joints in Georgia by Savor Georgia, the annual publication launched by Atlanta Magazine that's considered the definitive guide to Georgia's food and drink scene and is used as a resource for visitors across the southeast.

The burgers and fries are what The Yellow Jacket is known for, but at breakfast, you can't beat their biscuits and gravy with a side of bacon. Or, try one of their bacon, egg and cheese biscuits! And, you can't go wrong with a homemade milkshake! In addition, the crew offers many homemade dishes as well, such as chicken & dressing,

sweet potato casserole, pork chops, mac & cheese and spaghetti.

In addition, the restaurant gives back to the community in a variety of ways.

In recent years, the restaurant has provided coat drives outside for those in need during the winter; those in need a coat could simply walk up and pick out a coat off the rack.

And according to Ben, during COVID, the Yellow Jacket allowed members of the local National Guard Armory a place to sit and eat since they couldn't go anywhere for a year.

"We're extremely happy with where we're at in our lives and what we're doing," said Ben.

Missy said their sons, Bryson and Brody, are out and on their own now, and that she and Ben are enjoying their endeavors at The Yellow Jacket.

"We've got a great team; an excellent crew, which is led by Ashley McMichael," said Missy, noting that McMichael is the cook from when the Changs had the Yellow Jacket, and stayed on after the Bushongs took over the restaurant.

Besides the hard work and great food, the duo said that the final secret of their success is the way they treat others, from their staff to their customers.

"We try to treat everyone like family," said Ben.

"We are just very appreciative of everyone who comes through the door," said Missy.

That includes their hardworking staff. Once a year, around Christmas, the Bushongs hold "Employee Appreciation Day," where 100 percent of all sales that day go back to their employees as a special, extra gift for Christmas. The couple said their staff is a reflection of their restaurant and work hard to provide exceptional service to the community.

In the past couple of weeks, the couple announced their latest venture; expanding their food service into the Calhoun Bowling Center.



ABOVE: Ben and Missy Bushong, owners of The Yellow Jacket Drive-In. BELOW RIGHT: The Bushongs have taken over the cafe inside the Calhoun Bowling Alley, renaming it Jacket Snack Shack.

Serving the "best bites in the alley," the Jacket Snack Shack offers all of your favorites: Smash Burgers, Crispy Chicken Sandwiches, Pizzas, Loaded Nachos, Fries, Tots and more, Kids Combs and coming soon, cold beer.

The Jacket Snack Shack is perfect for league nights, family bowling, birthday parties and game night hangouts. Located inside the bowling alley, Jacket Snack Shack is open Monday – Thursday, 4:30 – 9 p.m.; Friday, 4:30 – 10 p.m.; Saturday, 1-10 p.m. and Sunday, 1 – 9 p.m.



And, for added convenience, you can now order from The Yellow Jacket Drive-In on the Foodbooking app!

The Yellow Jacket is located at 801 Oothcalooga Street in Calhoun. Find them on Facebook and Instagram!



GORDON COUNTY CAFES THROUGH THE YEARS: Calhoun, 1946. Interior of Offutt's Cafe located on South Wall Street. R.F. Offutt was the owner.



GORDON COUNTY CAFES THROUGH THE YEARS - PICTURED LEFT: Calhoun, 1927. Interior of the Jule Neal Drugstore located on North Wall Street. A tearoom was located in the rear of the store. This business later became the Willis V. Owen Drug Company. PICTURED RIGHT: Calhoun, ca. 1920. Interior of Chastain & Morris Drugstore located at the corner of Court Street and Park Avenue. It was originally known as Chastain Brothers Drugstore and was operated by Alonzo and Ben Chastain. In later years it has been called Chastain & Orr Drug Co. and now is Calhoun Drug Co. Note the soda fountain, the decorative wall treatment near the ceiling, and the fan attached to the top of a pole.



Celebrating 175 of Law Enforcement

Sheriff's Office has 175-year-long history of service to Gordon County

Brandi Owczarz
staff@gordongazettega.com

In May 2025, the Gordon County Sheriff's Office turned 175 years old, and held a dignified celebration to celebrate and honor the anniversary of the office, while also recognizing Peace Officers Memorial Day.

In the 175 years since Gordon County was formed, no elected office has been as important as that of Sheriff. The Office of Sheriff is a Georgia constitutional office, which dates back to 12th century England where the sheriffs of each "shire," or county, were the direct representatives of the king, responsible for collecting taxes and raising troops. Today, the sheriff and his staff are responsible for a wide variety of public services, which include servicing the Superior, Probate, Juvenile and Magistrate courts, enforcement of criminal law and maintaining the County jail.

There have been 44 sheriffs in Gordon County since 1850; those include:

- David C. Wylie (1850-1851; 1854-1855)
- Jesse M. Miller (1852-1853)
- John H. Arthur (1855-1856)
- Samuel T. King (1856 – 1858)
- E.D. Hudgins (1858-1859)
- John Gresham (1860-1861; 1864-1865; 1870-1874)
- Moses M. Dillard (1862-1863)
- J.B. Richards (1865-1866)
- Joseph McConnell (1866-1867)
- Napoleon B. Hudgins (1868-1869)
- Isaac E. Bartlett (1875-1876)
- W.G. Taylor (1877-1878; 1881-1885)
- William H. Black (1879-1880)
- Noah H. McGinnis (1885-1892; Killed, Line of Duty)
- W.T. Willingham (1892-1892)
- W.D. Fain (1893-1894)
- D.M. Durham (1895-1899)
- David Johnson (1899-1900)
- H.L. Smith (1901-1907)
- J.Q. Everett (1907-1911)
- T.N. Owens (1911-1912; Died in Office)
- R.H. Land (1913-1917)
- H.S. Watts (1917-1920; Died in Office)
- T.M. Watts (1920-1921)
- E.L. Medders (1920-1925)
- F.A. Cochran (1925-1929)
- Will Shirley (1929-1933)
- Lee Barrett (1933-1936)
- George Welchel (1936-1938)
- Coley Kay (1938-1942)
- Lee Erwin (1942-1946)
- George Fox (1946-1948)
- J.E. 'Doc' Miller (1948)
- Frank Wilson (1949-1952)
- Hugh Prater (1952-1956)
- Hugh Don Davis (1956-1972)
- Pat Baker (1973-1988)
- Sid Roberts (1989-2000)
- Jerry Davis (2001-2008)
- Mitch Ralston (2009-present)

Sheriff Noah McGinnis has been the only Gordon County Sheriff killed in the line of duty, which occurred in Plainville in 1892.

"Sheriff Noah H. McGinnis served as Sheriff of Gordon County from 1885-1892; he led a remarkable life, a life beset by trials and danger," said Chief Deputy Robert Paris. "It was a life tragically cut short in the line of duty. His family originated in Northern Ireland and first appeared in North Georgia records around the time of the Indian removal. As a young man, McGinnis initially served on the Confederate side of the Civil War, 21st Georgia Infantry but subsequently in the 145th Indiana Infantry in the Union Army. After the Civil War, McGinnis returned to Gordon County, probably while employed in the timber business. According to (news reports from that time), 'Noah McGinnis in Sugar Valley was run over by a log cart last week and was seriously and probably fatally injured.' He survived his near-fatal injuries and was elected sheriff in 1885. By all accounts, Sheriff McGinnis was a brave peace officer and a dedicated public servant, admired and respected in the community. On November 26th, 1892, acting upon information that a notorious gang of train robbers were hiding near Plainville, Sheriff McGinnis formed a posse consisting of himself, his deputy and several other men. They traveled to Plainville and surrounded the cabin the train robbers were hiding. Sheriff McGinnis was met at the front door with a shotgun blast and fell mortally wounded. His deputy was also shot and



Sheriff Mitch Ralston, at podium, gives remarks during the 175th anniversary ceremony for the GCSO.

wounded in the fusillade. The robbers escaped for a brief time but were later captured. Sheriff McGinnis died the following day in a hospital in Rome, and he is buried in Fain Cemetery here in Calhoun. (Local news reported of his death), 'In his death, Gordon County loses one of our most efficient officers; a citizen of noble and generous characteristics and a state, one of her most valiant and vigilant pursuers of violations of our penal statutes.'"

According to Paris, McGinnis' death was also reported in Chattanooga, Tenn., with The Chattanooga Evening News saying, "Sheriff McGinnis, who died yesterday from wounds received in battle with train robbers the other day, has probably captured more escaped criminals and received more rewards than any other man in the state. A plain farmer, he has in his nature shrewdness, common sense, energy and indomitable courage. While rough in appearance, his heart and appearance were of gold.'"

At last year's celebration, Major Ritchie Harris and Sheriff Mitch Ralston rendered the honor of unveiling a street sign, which has been placed at the entrance of the Gordon County Sheriff's Office and Gordon County Jail, naming the entrance the "Sheriff Noah H. McGinnis Memorial Drive."

According to Paris, the Office of Sheriff is one of four constitutional officers in every county in the State of Georgia, and is described by law as the chief conservator of the peace, the basic peace officer for the state and the chief jailer of each county.

"The sheriff has three principle duties: delivering law enforcement services in all areas not serviced by police, the service and enforcement of writs, warrants and civil actions from the courts, and the operation of the county jail," said Paris. "The sheriff is the oldest law enforcement officer in America and some of the other authority vested in the sheriff includes the power to arrest and impound livestock running at large, the power to close unsafe bridges and the power to close houses of ill repute. The Office of Sheriff of Gordon County has continued uninterrupted, even through the Civil War, from 1850 until today. On December 1st, 1892, Sheriff Noah McGinnis died in the line of duty from wounds received in a gun fight with T.M. Watts and George Fox died in office of natural causes. Sheriff Hugh Don Davis was the first sheriff to receive formal, state-approved training at the Georgia Police Academy after the establishment of the POST Act; he served four terms in office. Sheriff Pat Baker was the first sheriff from (Gordon County) to be president of the Sheriff's Office in 1979 and 1980; he served four terms in office. He was the first sheriff to have around-the-clock patrols and dedicated investigators. Sheriff Mitch Ralston, Gordon County's 44th sheriff, was the first Republican elected to this office. He is serving his fifth term in office today, and is Gordon County's longest serving sheriff."

According to Paris, Gordon County has had six different jails since 1850, built in 1852, 1886, 1910, 1961, 1991 and the most recent built in 2008.

"All but the present facility in Resaca stood on Piedmont Street behind the courthouse in Calhoun," said Paris.

Sheriff Noah McGinnis, pictured right, has been the only Gordon County Sheriff killed in the line of duty, which occurred in Plainville in 1892. On November 26th, 1892, acting upon information that a notorious gang of train robbers were hiding near Plainville, Sheriff McGinnis formed a posse consisting of himself, his deputy and several other men. They traveled to Plainville and surrounded the cabin the train robbers were hiding. Sheriff McGinnis was met at the front door with a shotgun blast and died at the hospital the next day.



Calhoun, 1930s. Moonshine still on exhibit in front of the Gordon County Jail located on Piedmont Street. Left to right: Jim Owens, Will Shirley, Grady Moore. The jail is no longer there.

175TH

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

GORDON COUNTY

ANNIVERSARY

OFFICE of the SHERIFF of GORDON COUNTY

 W.G. TAYLOR 1881-1885	 NOAH MCGINNIS 1885-1892	 H.L. SMITH 1901-1907	 T.N. OWENS 1911-1913	 R.H. LAND 1913-1917	 E.L. MEDDERS 1920-1925
 WILLIAM A. SHIRLEY 1929-1933	 LEE BARRETT 1933-1936	 GEORGE E. WELCHEL 1936-1938	 LEE ERWIN 1942-1946	 GEORGE FOX 1946-1948	 FRANK E. WILSON 1949-1952
 HUGH PRATER 1952-1956	 HUGH DON DAVIS 1956-1972	 PAT BAKER 1973-1988	 SID ROBERTS 1989-2000	 JERRY DAVIS 2001-2008	 MITCH RALSTON 2009-

Many of the sheriffs who have served Gordon County over the last 175 years.

"The 1852 jail was destroyed by a tornado.

Sheriff Mitch Ralston says he is honored that he has worked among the "best and finest folks you could ever imagine" in his time in law enforcement, and is in awe of those who put their lives on the line every day to serve the public.

"Why'd they do it? I have no idea," said Ralston of the reasons peace officers serve. "Why I did it? I think it's because of the way we were raised. I had a loving mother and father, and it's a good feeling to serve others. I

started out as a 21-year-old police officer with the City of Calhoun. To be able to recognize these young men and women, who choose to do this for a living, is an honor and God bless you for serving others. Sheriff is a unique position, and I didn't realize how unique it was until I became the sheriff. Without the courage and fortitude of all peach officers, the foundation of our judicial system wouldn't exist. To everyone who chooses to wear the badge, thank you for your service and commitment to the people you serve. Peace and safety equals freedom and prosperity for all."

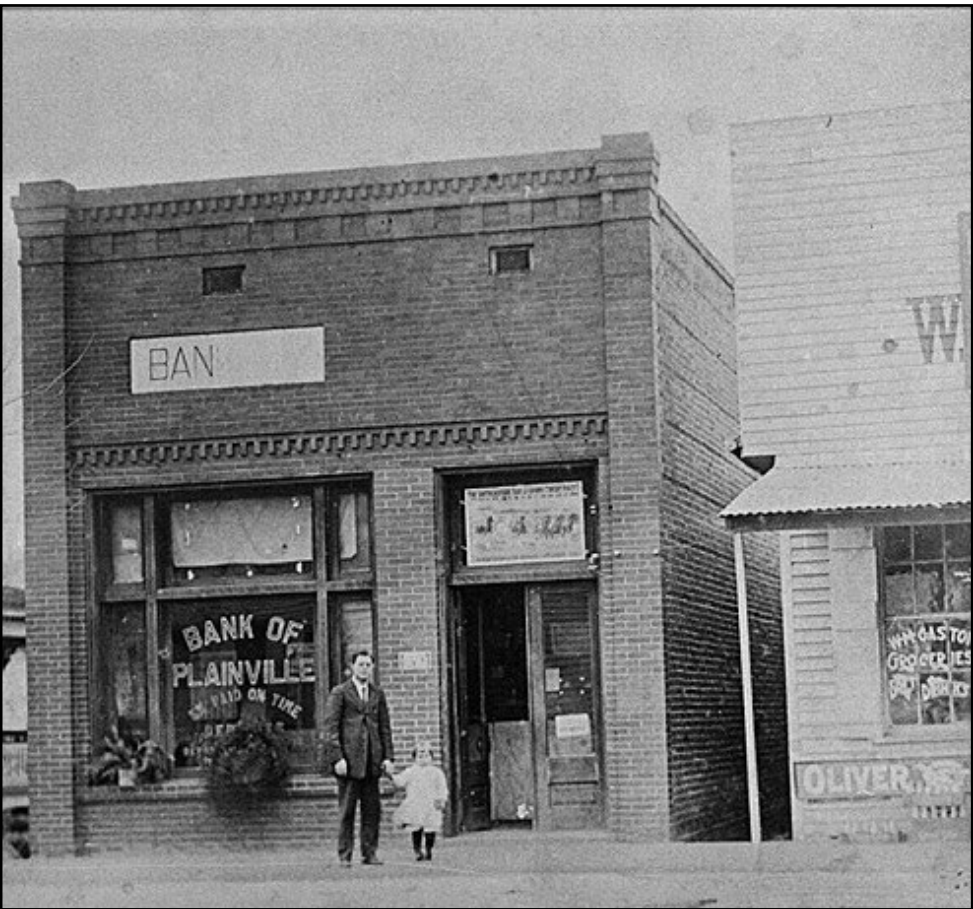
Gordon County through the years



Calhoun Cab Co - Aug. 1944. The Calhoun Cab Company operated this city bus for two years. The first driver was Ernest "Buck" Brown. The route ran from Motor Aid No. 6 along U.S. Highway 41 to Rock City located on South Wall Street. This was the only bus line the city ever had. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



First Rural Mail Carriers-Calhoun, May 23, 1905: Said to be the first rural mail carriers in Gordon County. They pose for a photograph in their horse and buggies Left to right: Cobb McEntyre, Will Buford, J.V. Adams, Henry Fox, John Ray. Note the muddy condition of North Park Avenue. Until rural free delivery service was begun ca. 1900, the only way to get one's mail was to go to the post office in Calhoun. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Plainville Bank, 1912: The Bank of Plainville which was founded in 1912. In 1926 it was dissolved. At right, part of W.M. Gaston Groceries can be seen. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



4th of July parade in Calhoun, July 4, 1926: Automobile parade along Court Street as part of the July 4th festivities. Note the flags which have been displayed and note some of the businesses that can be seen. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)

When Aging Is Shared, Life Feels Lighter.



The full value of senior living is knowing the right care and support is there when you need it.

CALHOUN

MorningPointe

Assisted Living & Memory Care

660 Jolly Road, NW

Calhoun, GA 30701

(706) 629-0777

The Soundtrack of Gibson’s Life

After 50 years in the business, Georgia 101.7 WJTH’s Larry Gibson reflects on his storied career and the importance of community radio

Brandi Owczarz
staff@gordongazettega.com

Larry Gibson knew at a very young age that he wanted to one day work in radio; as a matter of fact, he never thought of any other career.

“As a youngster, I had a small transistor radio that I would listen to at night after going to bed. At night you could pick up stations from all over the country, like WLS in Chicago, 1190 WOWO, Fort Wayne, WCKY, Cincinnati and many others. I was fascinated with radio; the fact that you could send wireless transmissions through the air over long distances was amazing. The science behind it all was incredible, as were the voices that brought the world to you,” said Gibson. “When I was eight years old, I attended a live remote radio broadcast where I met and talked to the legendary Radio Personality, Tommy Jett. I found him to be a class act. He was so nice and even put me on the air. I was just some kid, he didn’t have to take time out for me, but he did. It was that day I made up my mind to pursue a career in radio.”

The Dalton native began his career not many years later, as a teenager.

“I got my chance when the Latin Club at my High School did a radio program called ‘The Wonderful World of Languages,’” said Gibson. “I became the host, and over time, station employees taught me how to work all the equipment and operate the audio console. Once I was proficient, I was offered the next part-time position that became available. In 1976, I took the FCC exam and became a licensed broadcaster.”

For 50 years, Gibson has worked in every facet of radio and has worked at about 10 stations in all, with each one giving him experience and particular knowledge he would carry on through his career..

“Of all the stations I have worked for, each one have played a big part in a life-long learning experience as each one presented its own set of opportunities and challenges, but the one station that still holds a big place in my heart is the first station I ever worked at, which is WBLJ in Dalton,” said Gibson. “I find this holds true for most radio people as they all seem to have a soft spot for the one station that launched their future. And I am one of the lucky ones; God has allowed me to work in an industry that I dearly love. I have held every position in this business I have ever wanted from disc jockey, to program director, operations manager to owner.

Sam Thomas, the longtime owner of WJTH in Calhoun, hired Gibson to run the programming when the station was still located on Richardson Road. While working at WJTH, Gibson went back to college and earned his degree in Theology. He then started and operated the online Christian radio station, Grace Radio WGRM-DB., which can be found at <https://grace-radio.com/>

With more than 50 years in radio, a lot has changed over the years, mostly driven by technology.

“On the positive side, advancements in technology have certainly exploded,” said Gibson. “When I began in 1976, there were no computers; in fact, Steve Jobs built his first computer, Apple 1, that same year. At that time, we played music from vinyl records. Now we use a digital database. Back then, commercials were recorded on reel tape, then dubbed over to cartridges or ‘carts’ for airplay. Now they are also run off a computer. Sporting events, like Atlanta Braves Baseball or the Atlanta Falcons, were received through a dial-up system, which was a phone line, and sounded like it, too. Then came satellite technology, which changed everything; the broadcast became so clear it’s like you are actually there at the game. The world also became a smaller place through satellite technology; we used to have to ‘ip-n-read’ national news from a

teletype service. Now, via satellite, events are brought to you instantly from anywhere in the world as they are actually happening.”

And the technology that has improved radio communication makes it so much more available to listeners.

“We live in an age where radio is now more accessible than at any time in its history,” said Gibson. “I was talking with my boss, Evan Stone, last week and he pointed out that instead of having to bring a radio along, you now have one with you all the time through your cell phone since most stations now stream their audio. Your favorite radio station is always with you wherever you are.”

Gibson reminds everyone that the Georgia 101.7 streaming app, which has just recently launched, is free to download. To get the Georgia 101.7 streaming app, simply visit your app store on your phone and search for Georgia 1017 WJTH.

While there have been many great changes over the airwaves the last five decades, there have also been some negative aspects, according to Gibson.

“On the downside, since the 1980’s, there has been a growing number of large corporations buying up radio stations across the country for investment purposes, and many of these acquisitions have not had a positive outcome,” said Gibson. “Corporations located in New York or in Texas are too far away and are out of touch with the needs of a community radio station in a town like Calhoun. Those stations can no longer be considered ‘local’ as their focus is no longer on serving the public interest but rather their own. Their lack of attention to local has hurt the relationship between those radio stations and their communities, with many of those corporations having to divest themselves from their broadcasting properties and many filing for bankruptcy. After all the trials and tribulations, I think the lesson has been learned: don’t buy a radio station unless you know what to do with it, and never ever come between a local radio station and its community.”

As Gibson looks to the not so distant future of radio, he is pleased with some changes taking place.

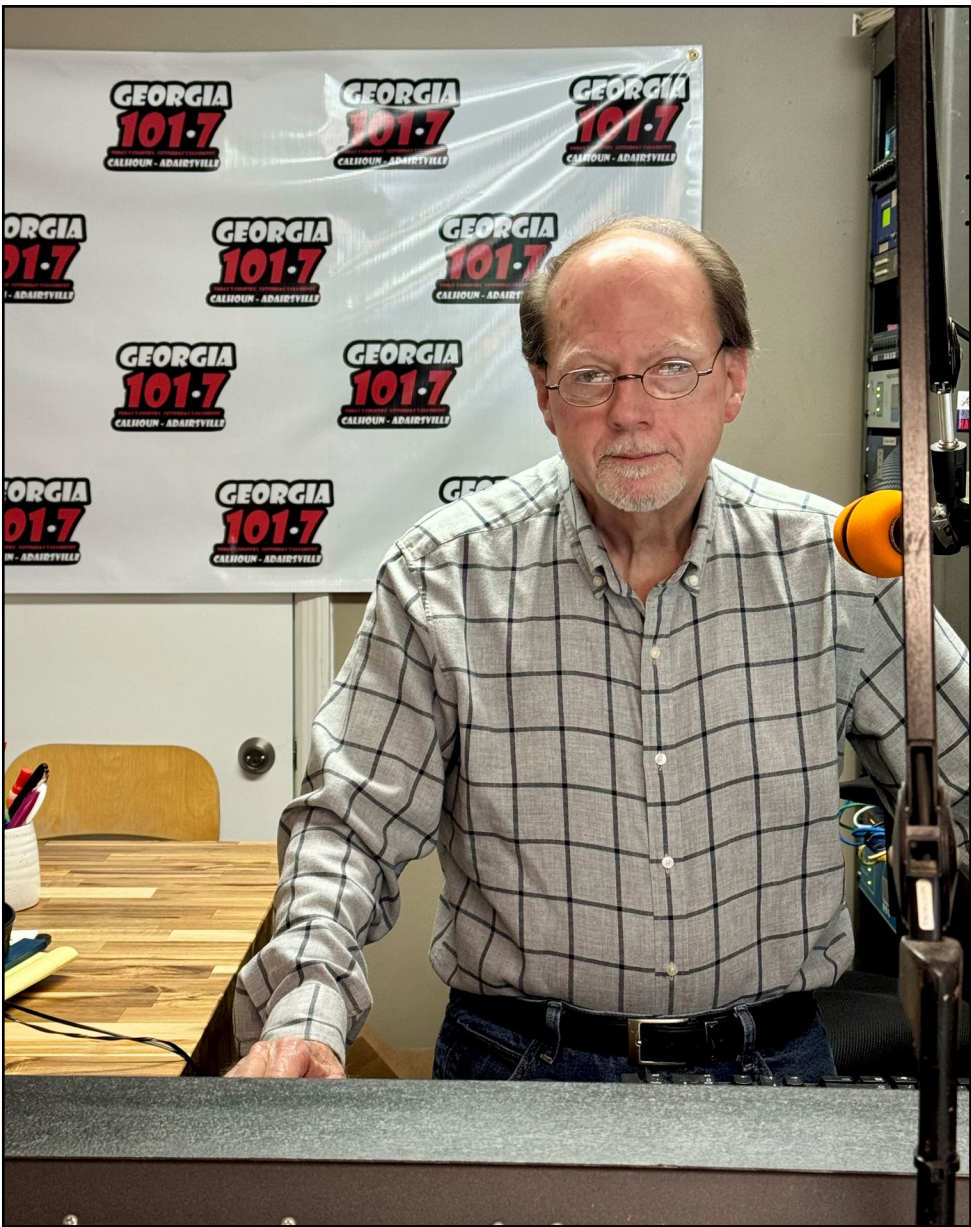
“I see great things on the horizon, as more and more radio stations come back under the control of local owners and operators that know and understand the importance of the relationship between their station and their community, and that’s just what it is, a relationship,” said Gibson. “Radio has always been a ‘people to people’ business and should always remain so. Now, having said that, I approach the future with caution as what changes, good or bad, that A.I. might bring.”

Nobody understands community radio as a people to people business more than Gibson, and he’s very invested in the Calhoun-Gordon County community, which began when his longtime and invaluable friendship with Thomas brought him to WJTH.

“I first met Sam Thomas back in the early 90’s when he came to the station I was working at to view an early radio automation system we were using,” said Gibson. “This was when computers first started to invade our control rooms; it ran on DOS and did maybe one percent of what they can do today. Afterward, we became friends, we kept in touch and I assisted him in various projects over time. I came to work for him full time eight years ago and served as his program director. Sam was always good to me and I will always appreciate him and the time we worked together.”

And while the newer generations did not necessarily grow up on radio due to streaming platforms, community radio is something that’s of utmost importance to every city and town in the county.

“Community Radio is Local Radio. The fact that Georgia 101.7



TOP: Program Manager Larry Gibson behind the board at Georgia 101.7 WJTH in Calhoun. Gibson appreciates getting to spend more than 50 years in a career doing what he dreamed of doing as a young child...radio. BELOW: Gibson (seated) interviews a doctor from AdventHealth when the station was located on Richardson Road.



WJTH is called ‘Community First Radio’ is no accident. We know and understand what community radio is and the importance of it, and it is a commitment and responsibility we do not take lightly,” said Gibson. “We work every day to meet the standards of what ‘Community First’ means. Every morning, you hear Brent and Brandi bringing you the news and information you need to get your day started, along with interviews of local business owners, local community leaders and elected officials to keep you, the community, informed and up to date on what’s happening right here where you live. Community Radio also helps local businesses to grow through understanding your business goals and creating an advertising package designed to reach customers in need of your products or services. We also broadcast local sports along with Atlanta Braves Baseball, UGA Football, Basketball and Baseball, Atlanta Falcons and we are also your local NASCAR affiliate station. Being a community station means being a full service radio station, offering you the best in news and sports; local, state and national, first alert weather, your favorite sports teams, the biggest hits from the biggest stars in Country music, competitive advertising rates and more. I don’t know of many communities that can boast having a station that works

harder and is more committed to its community.

“A radio station needs its community and the community needs its radio station,” continued Gibson. “WJTH began when Sam Thomas saw a need. WCGA was a radio station in Calhoun that had gone dark; it had been off the air for about seven years. Sam Thomas and his partners bought it and put it back on the air as WJTH in June of 1977. Sam believed that the community needed a radio station that was locally-focused and community-oriented. That legacy of community-focused radio continues to this day through a renewed commitment by the stations new ownership. Over the past year, Evan Stone and Chris Goforth have worked to make that relationship stronger than ever by spending time just getting to know people, listening to their needs and ideas and letting them know that Georgia 101.7 WJTH is their community radio station and is there for them however we can be of service. Getting the word out and bringing the community closer together is what I think a good radio station should do, and when that happens, everybody wins.”

You can find Georgia 101.7 WJTH by saying, “Alexa, play Georgia 101.7” or downtown the Georgia 101.7 app from your Apple or Android App Store.

GNTC celebrated strengthened partnerships and earned recognition in 2025

GNTC

In 2025, Georgia Northwestern Technical College (GNTC) entered into strategic partnerships that boost educational opportunities for northwest Georgia residents, earned recognition and continued to grow its footprint in the northwest Georgia region.

AdventHealth and GNTC signed an agreement designed to boost enrollment in GNTC's Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) program, thereby helping to expand and continue nursing education services in northwest Georgia.

The collaboration is designed to strengthen the connection between academic preparation and clinical practice by expanding clinical placement opportunities, supporting workforce development and fostering shared initiatives in nursing education, evidence-based practice and quality care.

"GNTC's mission has always centered on meeting the workforce needs of our community," said Dr. Heidi Popham, GNTC president. "This partnership with AdventHealth will not only expand access to nursing education, but will also help ensure our healthcare providers have the trained professionals they need to deliver high-quality care."

Statewide recognition

Noelia Sargento, a student from GNTC, was named the Technical College System of Georgia's (TCSG) 2025 Adult Education Student of the Year and recipient of the Dinah Culbreath Wayne Exceptional Adult Georgian in Literacy Education (EAGLE) Award for the State of Georgia.

The Leadership Institute recognizes and honors those students who have demonstrated superior achievement in Adult Education classes and programs. Sargento earned her High School Equivalency (HSE) through GNTC's Adult Education program in June 2024.

"I consider myself a modern mom, balancing my family and career," Sargento said. "Despite a full plate, I managed to make room to further my education. At first, I struggled to juggle school, work, raising two children and supporting my husband, but the online HSE courses were flexible to fit my schedule."

Regional recognition

Dr. Heidi Popham, president of GNTC, was selected to serve on the Board of Trustees for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

SACSCOC is the accrediting body for degree-granting higher education institutions in the southern states, including Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia and Latin America and certain other international sites approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that award associate, baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degrees. Its mission is to assure the educational quality and improve the effectiveness of its member institutions; the organization's core values are integrity, continuous quality improvement, peer review/self-regulation, accountability, student learning and transparency.

Dr. Popham was elected to serve as part of Georgia's SACSCOC delegation during the 2025 SACSCOC Annual Meeting in Nashville. Her 3-year term began in January.

National recognition

The Aspen Institute named



(From left) Amy Jordon, chief nursing executive of AdventHealth Southeast Region and chief nursing officer of AdventHealth Redmond; Isaac Sendros, president and CEO of AdventHealth Georgia and AdventHealth Redmond; Dr. Heidi Popham, president of Georgia Northwestern Technical College (GNTC); and Becky Redd, chair of GNTC Board of Trustees, sign a partnership agreement designed to boost enrollment in GNTC's Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) program.

GNTC as one of the 200 institutions eligible to compete for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation's premier recognition of high achievement and performance among two-year colleges. The 200 colleges were selected based on their student outcomes data, including retention, completion, transfer and bachelor's attainment rates.

Together, these 200 colleges represent the breadth and diversity of the community college sector. Some of these colleges focus primarily on workforce programs, while others focus on transfer and bachelor's attainment or a combination of the two.

"The Aspen Prize rewards colleges that achieve the kind of outcomes that actually matter to students—completing college degree programs that, in turn, lead to lifelong success," said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program.

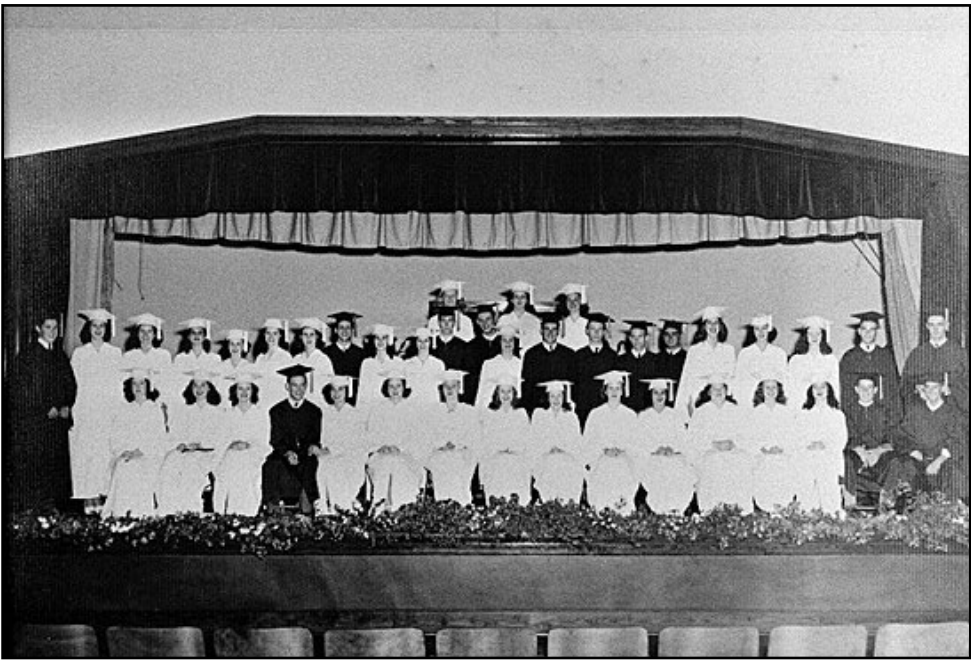
Continued growth

As part of its continued growth in the northwest Georgia region, GNTC is expanding its Commercial Truck Driving-Class A program with a new driving range on the Whitfield Murray Campus in Dalton.

The new 100,515 square foot driving range will be in addition to the Commercial Truck Driving-Class A driving range on the Walker County Campus (WCC) in Rock Spring. GNTC also has a driving range on its Polk County Campus (PCC) in Rockmart that offers Commercial Truck Driving-Class B training and certification, as well as training and certification for a restricted Class A Commercial Truck Driving (CDL) license as part of the Electrical Lineworker Program.

A new classroom building will be part of the new driving range facilities at WMC.

Georgia Northwestern Technical College provides quality workforce education to the citizens of northwest Georgia. Students have the opportunity to earn an associate degree, diploma or a certificate in aviation, business, health, industrial or public service career paths. This past year, 12,241 people benefited from GNTC's credit and noncredit programs. GNTC has an annual credit enrollment of 8,031 students and an additional enrollment of 4,210 people through adult education, continuing education, business and industry training and Georgia Quick Start.



Calhoun, 1947. Members of the graduating class at Calhoun High School pose for a photograph in their caps and gowns. Front row, left to right: Lois Lay, Sue Marie Franklin, May Ruth Garrin, Lamar Henderson, Betty Chastain, Sybil Clark, Maxie Jean Holt, Marjorie Dobbs, Sybil Holcomb, Mary Jean Barton, Edna Alexander, Willene Robinson, Wynelle Henderson, Vinita Owens, Bobby Hasty, Casey Moore. Middle row: _____ Nix, Evelyn B____, Annie Mae H____, Alice Fuller, Barbara F____, Carol Ann Wise, Annelle Clark, Bobby Lewis, Madge Osborne, Betty Burch, Coleman Brown, ALLan Smith, Bettye Jean Edwards, Robert Echols, Jimmy Bearden, Billy Burdette, Eddie Roe, Nan Hasson, Barbara Reeves, Frances Moody, Blake Putnam, Grover Causby, Jr. Top row: Sarah Mims Harrison, Charlotte Williams, Marjorie Henderson. This photograph was taken by Gallman's Studio which was located in Calhoun, Ga. at the time this photograph was taken.



Sonoraville, 1937. Members of the graduating class at Sonoraville pose for a photograph in front of the school.

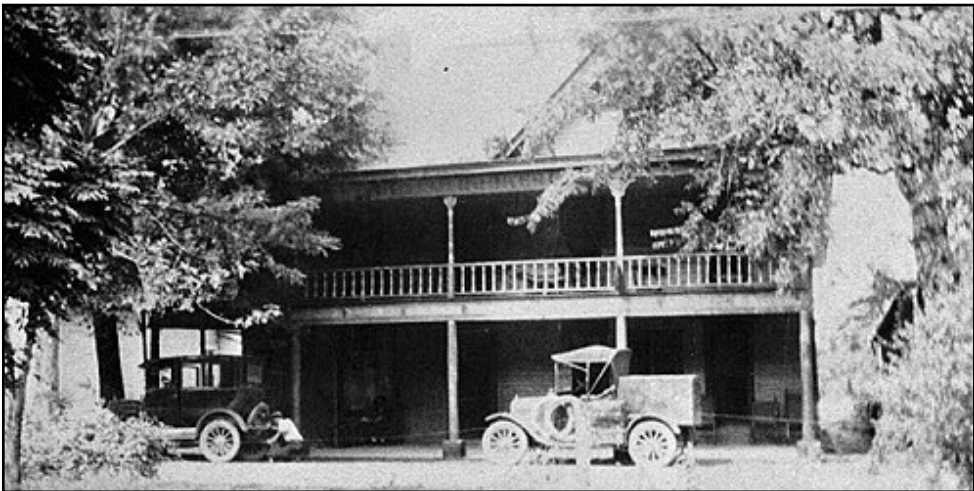


Calhoun, 1929-1930. Members of the sophomore class at Calhoun High School pose for a photograph in front of the school which was located on College Street.

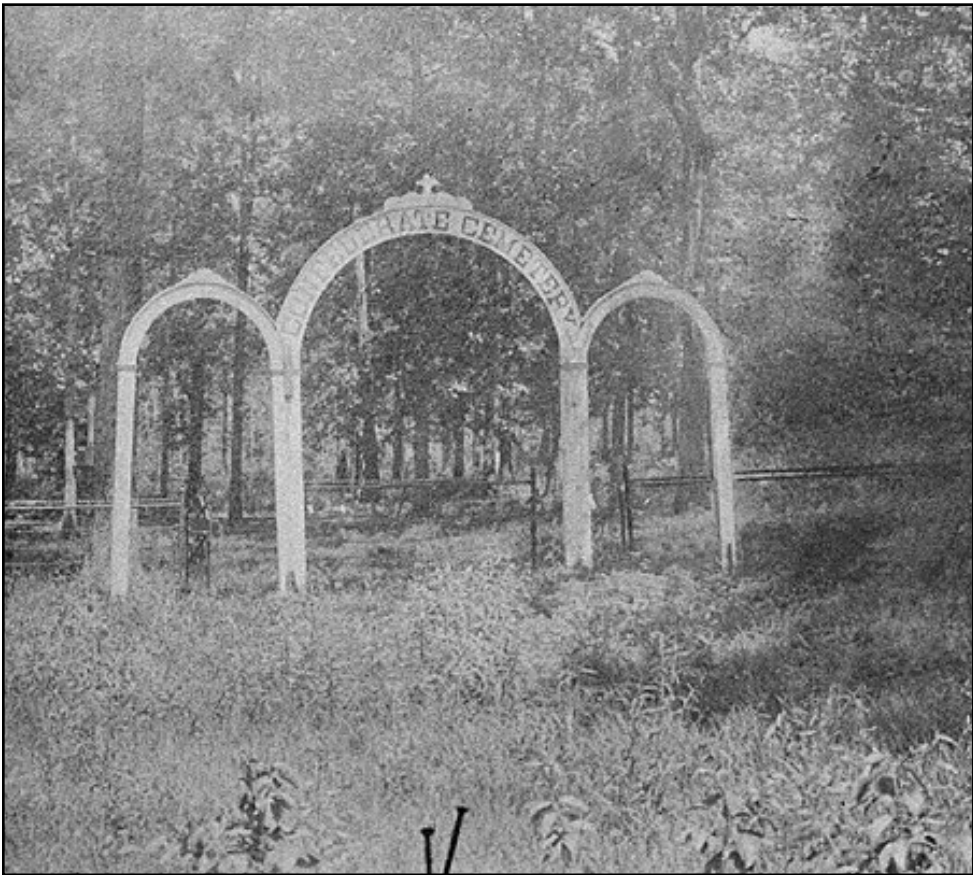
Gordon County through the years



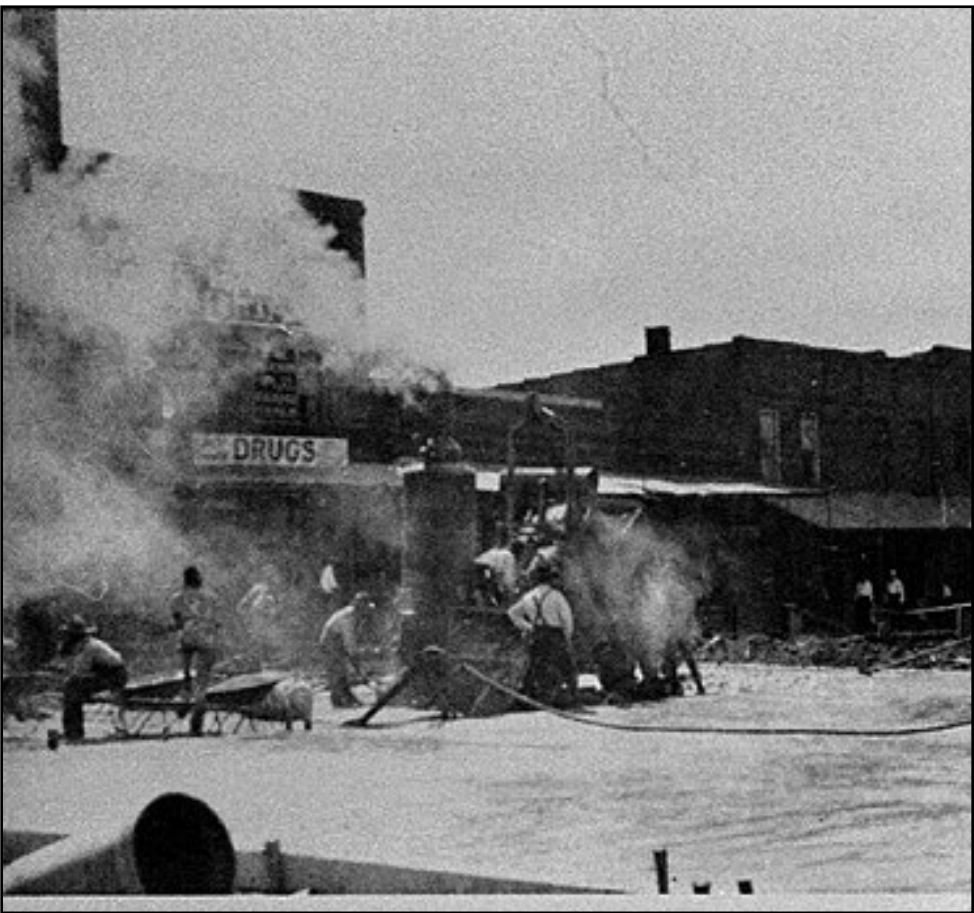
Plainville house construction, ca. 1900: Workers in the process of constructing a house pause to pose for a photograph. Note the tools and the wheelbarrow filled with bricks. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Rooker Hotel, Calhoun, 1904: Rooker Hotel located one block west of Oothcaloga Depot was operated by members of the Rooker family. In 1935 a new Rooker Hotel was built located on North Wall Street. The Rooker Hotel, which was built in 1935, has been converted into the "Harris Arts Center, Calhoun-Gordon Arts Council and Roland Hayes Museum. The 8,000-square-foot hotel, located off U.S. Highway 41 in the heart of downtown, was remodeled into a three-story arts and entertainment complex in 2000. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Entrance to Confederate Cemetery in Resaca, 1908. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



1918 Street Paving in Calhoun: Workers in the process of paving Court and North Wall Streets. Note the machinery at the left. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)

NO MONEY? NO PROBLEM!
APPLY TO GNTC FOR FREE IN MARCH



USE CODE:
MARCH26

Exceptional women’s healthcare close to home

The Calhoun Women’s Center opens on Willowbrook Way

Brandi Owczarz
staff@gordongazettega.com

The Calhoun Women’s Center, comprised of two board-certified OB/GYN physicians with the mission of providing compassionate, personalized care for women of all ages and stages of life, has opened their doors at 100 Willowbrook Way in Calhoun.

The Calhoun Women’s Center is a physician-owned OB-GYN practice providing obstetrics, gynecology and women’s health services such as gynecology, pregnancy care, fertility evaluation and treatment, along with menopause care and hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

As a physician-owned private practice, The Calhoun Women’s Center has the flexibility to get to know their patients, understand patient’s needs and tailor their care to their life.

Dr. Tiffany General is one of the two board-certified OB/GYNs in the practice.

“I’m honored to care for the women and families of this community. Women’s health has been my life’s work, and I feel privileged every day to walk alongside my patients through so many important moments—from routine visits to pregnancy, menopause, and everything in between,” said Dr. General.

Dr. General earned her medical degree from the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, completing her residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Emory University in Atlanta.

“During my training, I was deeply honored to receive multiple recognitions from the Council for Resident Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology, including awards for excellence in obstetrics and gynecology. These experiences helped shape both my clinical skills and my commitment to providing thoughtful, individualized care,” said Dr. General. “Over the years, I’ve had the opportunity to care for women across Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama. Each community has taught me something valuable, but the most important lesson has always been the same—every woman deserves to feel heard, respected and cared for as a whole person. I believe the most important part of my job is listening. My goal is to create

a space where you feel comfortable asking questions, sharing concerns and trusting that you have a physician who is truly invested in your health and wellbeing.”

Dr. General said that outside of medicine, she’s first and foremost a mother.

“We are very much a boy family, and much of our life revolves around sports, outdoor activities and family road trips,” said Dr. General. “I enjoy reading, cooking and traveling when I can, and I treasure the everyday moments with my children. These experiences shape who I am and deepen my understanding of the women and families I care for.”

In addition, Dr. General is a mentor and educator to her patients concerning their health.

“I care deeply about education and empowering women with knowledge about their bodies and their health,” said Dr. General. “Throughout my career, I’ve been involved in community education and outreach, helping women feel confident and informed in their healthcare decisions. At The Calhoun Women’s Center, my priority is simple: to provide compassionate, personalized care and to build lasting relationships with the women and families we serve. It is truly a privilege to care for my patients, and I’m grateful for the opportunity to be part of their journey.”

The other board-certified OB/GYN at the practice is Dr. Joseph Harmon, who grew up in Calhoun.

“I’m honored to care for the women and families of Calhoun, the community where I grew up and where my family and I have chosen to put down roots,” said Dr. Harmon. “After graduating from Calhoun High School, I pursued my medical training at Mercer University School of Medicine and completed my residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. I have practiced in a few places across the country that have added to my breadth of experience. Although I am grateful for those experiences and how they have shaped me both personally and professionally, I am very glad to finally be returning home to Calhoun.”

Dr. Harmon said that along the way, he discovered a passion for teaching and helping to prepare the next generation of OB/GYN



The Calhoun Women’s Center has opened their doors at 100 Willowbrook Way in Calhoun. Dr. Tiffany General and Dr. Joseph Harmon are the two board-certified OB/GYN physicians offering compassionate, personalized care for women of all ages and stages of life.

physicians.

“I’m proud to spend a few days each month as an attending physician at the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where I work with resident physicians and share in their training. Teaching is something I do in addition to my work here at Calhoun Women’s Center, and it allows me to stay closely connected to the latest advances in women’s health while keeping my primary focus where it belongs—caring for my patients here at home,” said Dr. Harmon.

Dr. Harmon’s goal with service is taking the time to get to know his patients and understanding their concerns.

“I believe the most important part of my job is listening. Every woman’s story is different, and my role is to take the time to understand your concerns, answer your questions and walk with you through whatever stage of life you’re in,” said Dr. Harmon. “Whether I’m caring for you during pregnancy, helping you navigate hormonal changes, or addressing gynecologic concerns, you can expect thoughtful, honest care from someone who is fully invested in you and in this community.”

Outside of the medical practice, Dr. Harmon enjoys spending time with his family and glad he gets to raise his family in his hometown.

“I have, along this route, found a lovely wife, Zahnwhea, who puts

up with all of my shenanigans and has been by my side for well over a decade. She and I have walked through many tough and beautiful moments in our lives and along the way we have grown our family through adoption, NICU stays, and cesarean deliveries,” said Dr. Harmon. “We are very thankful to have the family that we do and love to spend time with our children. My wife and I are raising our children here, and this community means everything to us.”

Of his view of his practice, Dr. Harmon says that, “When you come to The Calhoun Women’s Center, you’re not just another patient—you’re a neighbor, and it is truly a privilege to care for you. Calhoun Women’s Center is my professional home and my primary focus, and I am deeply committed to serving the women and families of this community for many years to come.”

In the near future, The Calhoun Women’s Center will be welcoming Dr. Harmon’s wife, Zahnwhea, currently the owner and therapist at Harmon Counseling, to provide therapy services primarily for women experiencing postpartum depression and anxiety.

For more information on The Calhoun Women’s Center, visit their website at <https://calhounwomenscenter.com/>. The practice is accepting new patients at this time.



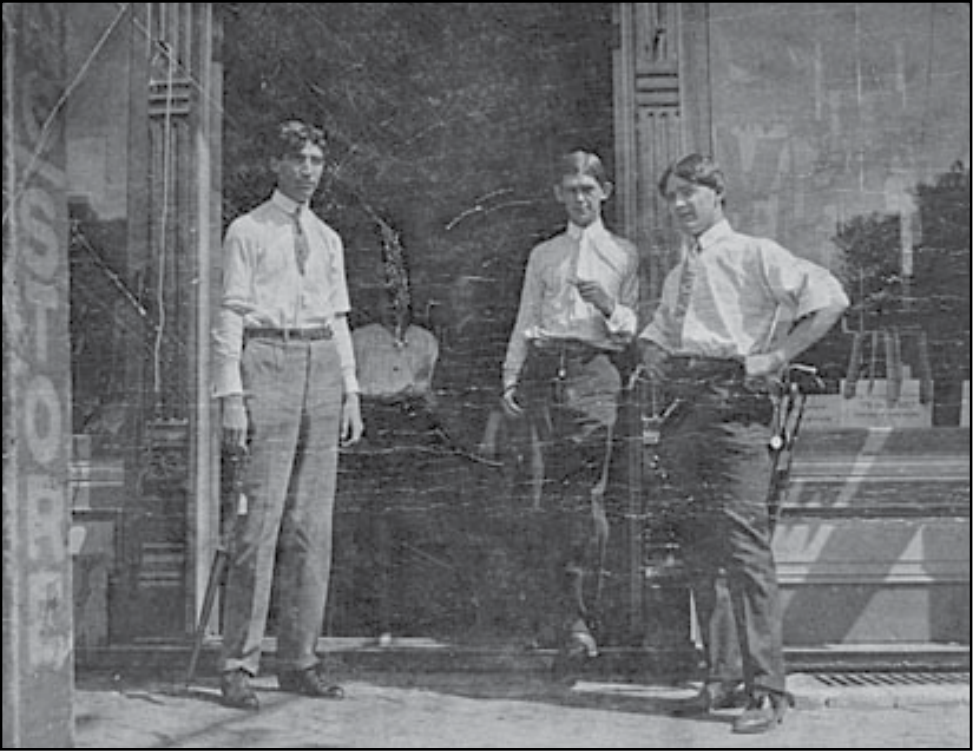
Calhoun, 1976. Gordon Hospital came into existence in January 1950. The hospital was dedicated October 18, 1953. In 1979, money was raised to build the present hospital which is located on Red Bud Road.



Calhoun, 1939. Members of the Gordon Chapter of the American Red Cross pose for a photograph on the steps of the Calhoun Woman’s Club Cabin. Front row, left to right: ?, R. L. Blackwell, A. B. David. Back row: R. L. Crutchfield, Dr. Roy Richards, Dr. John H. Boston, J. Carl Fo?



Calhoun, 1976. Katherine Dorsey Health Center was organized in 1959. The facility seen here was completed in 1961 and is located on Sugar Valley Road. The Calhoun Woman’s Club helped found the Katherine Dorsey Health Center. The building was demolished in 2019 and a new facility built it its place that opened in mid-2020.



“Calhoun, 1910. Doysh Bray, Dr. John H. Boston, and Henry Dorsey in front of 1st A. R. McDaniel Store on Court Street.”

Your heart keeps the beat for your life, work and family. **AdventHealth's Level 1 Cardiac Care Center** provides the highest level of care, close to home. Supported by the most extensive heart care network in Northwest Georgia, our services include advanced diagnostics and treatments for arrhythmia, minimally invasive procedures in the cath lab, cardiac rehab and a dedicated heart failure clinic.



*AdventHealth Redmond is recognized
by U.S. News & World Report as one of
America's best hospitals in 12 types of care.*

GeorgiaHeartExperts.com



Advent Health

18th annual Georgia String Band Festival, Fiddlers’ Convention to be held March 27-28

Brandi Owczarz
staff@gordongazettega.com

The 18th annual Georgia String Band Festival, and The Gordon County Fiddlers’ Convention, which was established in 1924, returns to the Harris Arts Center Friday and Saturday, March 27-28.

The annual music festival began as a way to honor the local artists who pioneered American Country and popular music recording, such as the Georgia Yellow Hammers and Andrew & Jim Baxter.

“Raising awareness of our local pioneer artists and engaging people of all ages in both enjoying and playing American roots music is the specific goal of this festival,” said Harris Arts Center Executive Director Crystal Chapman. “The festival strives to remember roots music and a period when our ancestors were trying to survive hard times. These times show how a fiddle could liven a small group and help them to forget their troubles for an evening of dance.”

In the 1920s, the Georgia Yellow Hammers were a popular old-time string and vocal quartet who hailed from Gordon County. The group was mainly comprised of Charles Moody, Jr. on guitar, Bud Landress on banjo, Phil Reeve on guitar and Bill Chitwood on fiddle. Each of the members was believed to be multi-instrumentalists, with all serving vocal duties as well. Various other members and recording associates included Clyde Evans, Andrew Baxter, Jim Baxter and Elias Meadows.

According to the New Georgia Encyclopedia, George Oscar “Bud” Landress was born in Gwinnett County in 1882 and moved to Gordon County in 1905. William Hewlitt “Bill” Chitwood, born in Resaca in 1891, was the youngest of twelve children. Chitwood’s older brother had a homemade fiddle that Chitwood sneaked out on occasion and learned to play; he also learned to play the banjo. Landress had the same versatility and also preferred the fiddle and banjo, which was important to the group: during this time period just prior to country southern music, the fiddle and banjo were predominantly featured instruments.

C. P. “Phil” Reeve, born in 1896, came to be business manager of both the Georgia Yellow Hammers and also of Andrew and Jim Baxter, a fiddler and guitar player from Curryville. Reeve’s father died in 1900, leaving Reeve’s mother to care for four small children. According to the New Georgia Encyclopedia, to support them she sold musical instruments. At around nine years old, Reeve drove a mule wagon around Gordon County delivering parlor pump reed organs. He also went to a school in Indiana to learn piano tuning and player piano maintenance. In 1906 his mother married Lawrence Moss, who owned Moss Music Company in Calhoun, which ended up being a music center for the Yellow Hammers and

others. Reeve’s stepfather encouraged him to stay in the music business. At some point in time, Reeve learned to yodel.

Just before the Georgia Yellow Hammers formed and began playing together in 1925, Chitwood and Landress traveled to New York to record for Brunswick Records, with Chitwood playing the fiddle and Landress the banjo. They recorded “Hen Cackle” and other selections such as “Whoa Mule” and “Over the Sea.”

Religious singing was popular throughout the South during the 1920s, and a religious influence is apparent in the music of the Yellow Hammers’ recordings once they began performing together. The group harmonized with Moody as tenor, Landress as lead and Chitwood as bass.

In 1927, the Georgia Yellow Hammers recorded ‘The Picture on the Wall’ / “My Carolina Girl,” which was the best-selling record the group ever had and one of the top sellers of the late 1920s southern market. The record became a hit and sold more than 60,000 copies in 1928 alone and more than twice that in all.

In 1929, the Great Depression hit and was hard on the record industry, bringing an end to both the Yellow Hammers’ recordings and also the Moss music store, which was the heart of musical activity in the community. Reeve went to work for the Department of Agriculture; the others went to work as well except for Landress, who continued performing into the 1940s with a group called the Georgia Mountaineers, who played over WRGA in Rome.

Landress died in 1966; Reeve died in 1949, Chitwood died in 1961, Clyde Evans died in 1975 and Ernest Moody died in 1977.

Closely associated with the Georgia Yellow Hammers were Gordon County’s father and son duo of Andrew and Jim Baxter. Andrew, who was born in 1869, was an African-American fiddle player; his son Jim, born in 1898 was an African-American-Cherokee singer and guitar player. The men were from the Curryville community, well known for producing Gordon County’s most prominent musician, world-renowned tenor Roland Hayes.

The Baxter duo performed and recorded throughout the 1920s.

“The Georgia Yellow Hammers shared both a label and recording dates with Andrew and Jim Baxter, who were popular African-American musicians for dances, fish-fries, picnics and house parties,” said Chapman. “Such integrated recordings were extremely rare during that period.”

The Baxters traveled and performed extensively with the Georgia Yellow Hammers. Since Jim Crow laws were recognized at that time, the Baxters would have to travel on a train ride several cars behind the Yellow Hammers. While on one train ride to Charlotte,



ABOVE: An artist rendering of ‘Crying Town,’ which was located off of Cash Road, situated on Crying Town Creek, where Pine Log Creek at Salacoa Creek is now. BELOW: What remains of the community known as Colima.

North Carolina to record in the summer of 1927, each group recorded their sessions individually except for one: Andrew Baxter played the fiddle on “G Rag” with the Yellow Hammers. That recording is believed to be one of the earliest integrated recordings of Georgia musicians.

The Baxters’ many recordings included “Bamalong Blues” / “K.C. Railroad Blues” in 1927 and “Forty Drops” / “Georgia Stomp” in 1927. “Forty Drops” was song penned as a tribute to Georgia corn moonshine; an instrumental with vocal comments.

After years of honoring the music of Gordon County’s past, in early 2018, the Georgia House of Representatives recognized the annual Georgia String Band Festival and Gordon County Fiddlers’ Convention as the Official String Band Festival of Georgia.

The late State Representative John Meadows, of Calhoun, who was the chair of the House Rules Committee, introduced the resolution, which was adopted on Feb. 7, 2018. It recognized Gordon County’s “proud musical heritage” and the festival that is “a yearly celebration of the beautiful tradition of old-time string band music and Georgia’s rich cultural history.” The official proclamation documented, in part, that “in 2007, the Calhoun Gordon Arts Council revived the practice of a local old-time string band music celebration with the Georgia String Band Festival ... by inviting nationally renowned old-time string band musicians to perform and reviving the day-long Gordon County Fiddlers’ Convention with contests highlighting singing, buck dancing, banjo picking, string band performances and fiddling.”

So during the last weekend of March, both the Georgia String Band Festival and the Gordon County Fiddlers’ Convention will offer plenty of pickin’ and grinnin’.

The event will be held at the Harris Arts Center, 212 North Wall Street in downtown Calhoun, with musicians spilling outside to tune and play throughout the weekend if the weather cooperates.

CONTINUED
Next Page

sponsored by:
Georgia
COUNTY
Arts

HARRISArtsCENTER

THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL
THE OFFICIAL STRING BAND FESTIVAL OF GEORGIA

GEORGIA
STRING BAND
FESTIVAL

FRIDAY NIGHT KICK-OFF CONCERT WITH
BRUCE MOLSKY & DAROL ANGER

FREE ADMISSION | FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026 | 7PM

THE GORDON COUNTY
FIDDLERS' CONVENTION

\$10 WRISTBANDS | SATURDAY, MARCH 28TH, 2026
REGISTRATION OPENS AT NOON

COMPETITIONS IN BANJO, BUCK DANCING,
FIDDLE, SINGING, & STRING BAND BEGIN AT 1PM

\$2,000 IN PRIZES

HarrisArtsCenter|212S Wall Street Calhoun, GA 30701

@harrisartscenter harrisartscenter.com 706.629.2599



The annual music festival began as a way to honor the local artists who pioneered American Country and popular music recording, such as the Georgia Yellow Hammers, above.



Andrew Baxter, far left, and Jim Baxter, far right, with an unidentified musician.

The weekend begins at 7 p.m. on Friday, March 27th, as The Harris Arts Center welcomes Bruce Molsky and Darol Anger to the Ratner Theater stage for the kickoff to the Georgia String Band Festival.

According to Molsky’s website, Darol and Bruce have been musical explorers together for years, sharing a creative universe that’s resulted in some epic collaborations, like the Grammy nominated Fiddlers Four (with Michael Doucet and Rushad Eggleston), crashing each other’s concerts and recordings, and just finding big joy in playing together.

Freestyle fiddler, composer, producer and educator, Darol Anger is at home in a number of musical genres, some of which he helped to invent. Exceptional among modern fiddlers for his versatility and depth, Anger has helped drive the evolution of the contemporary string band through his involvement with numerous path-breaking ensembles such as his Republic Of Strings, the Turtle Island String Quartet, the David Grisman Quintet, The Montreux Band, his Duo with Mike Marshall, his current touring group Mr Sun, and others. He has performed and taught all over the world with musicians such as Dr. Billy Taylor, Bela Fleck, Bill Evans, Edgar Meyer, Bill Frisell, Tony Rice, Tim O’Brien, The Anonymous 4, Marin Alsop and the Cabrillo Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony, Bruce Molsky, Mark O’Connor, and Stephane Grappelli.

Described as “an absolute master,” Bruce Molsky’s take on tradition has landed him in collaborations with some of the world’s most highly respected players from roots to rock. He is a special guest on legend rocker Mark Knopfler’s CD, “Tracker.” His 1865 Songs of Hope & Home with Anonymous 4, was on Billboard’s top 10 for weeks. Along with Andy Irvine & Donal Lunny, Bruce is a founding member of the supergroup Mozaik, with three recordings. Bruce holds the title of “Visiting Scholar in the American Roots Music Program” at Berklee College of Music, where he is the go-to guy for the next generation of roots musicians.

Admission for the Kick-off Concert is free. The concert begins at 7 p.m. Friday night, March 27th at the Harris Arts Center.

Then on Saturday, March 28th, the Gordon County Fiddlers’ Convention will take place



After years of honoring the music of Gordon County’s past, in early 2018, the Georgia House of Representatives, headed by the late Rep. John Meadows, third from right, recognized the annual Georgia String Band Festival and Gordon County Fiddlers’ Convention as the Official String Band Festival of Georgia. (FILE PHOTO). Participants from a prior Fiddlers’ Convention (FILE PHOTO).

beginning at 1 p.m. A competition established in 1924, it will feature traditional contests in singing, buck dancing, banjo, string band and fiddle. Admission to The Gordon County Fiddlers’ Convention is \$10 for wristbands. Registration for those wanting to compete in the contest begins at 12 noon.

“The festival reinforces this important part of Gordon County’s musical history by keeping it alive through education and encouraging the participation essential for its continuation for younger generations,” said Chapman.



The event is sponsored by The Gordon County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Historic Downtown Calhoun, Georgia Council for the Arts and other friends in the community.

For more information, visit The Georgia String Band Festival website at <https://harrisartscenter.com/stringband/>

Primary, Specialty, and Walk-In Care



- Family Medicine
- Walk-in Care
- Imaging - including 3D Mammography, Xray, Echocardiogram, Ultrasound, and Bone Density

- Cardiology
- Diabetes & Endocrinology
- Gastroenterology
- Interventional Pain Management
- Neurology



Walk-in Care
WEEKDAYS
7 AM-7 PM
WEEKENDS
8 AM-2 PM

- Pulmonology
- General Surgery
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy



GROWING. SERVING. ADVANCING.

Big things are happening at Hamilton Medical Center and Vitruvian Health.
Join us on a journey to better health.



Hamilton to hold women’s event

VITRUVIAN AT HAMILTON MEDICAL

Hamilton Medical Center (HMC) will host its annual “For Her” women’s event on Tuesday, March 24, 5 to 8 p.m. at the Dalton Convention Center. Registration will open on March 1.

At 5 p.m., there will be physician seminar, “Proactive Women’s Health: Identifying Early Indicators.” Participating providers will be Purnima Nighat Kabir, MD, endocrinologist at Hamilton Diabetes & Endocrinology Center, and Katie McCreery-Scarbor, AuD, CCC-A, audiologist at Hamilton Hearing Center. Those who attend the provider panel will have priority entry to the exhibit hall.

The exhibit hall will open at 6 p.m. and will include free health screenings, mini massages, acupuncture, food, health and wellness vendors, giveaways and door prizes.

All activities, services and giveaways will be available while supplies last and time permits. Those who register and attend the event will receive a free gift.

If you would like to attend this event and need assistance with

interpretation services and/or auxiliary aids, please indicated when registering.

To register, please visit VitruvianHealth.com/ForHer2026 or call 706-272-6114.

About Hamilton Medical Center

The flagship affiliate for Vitruvian Health’s Northwest Georgia region, Hamilton Medical Center (HMC) is a 255-bed regional acute-care hospital that offers major medical, surgical and diagnostic services, including accredited stroke and chest pain centers. Advanced technology and wellness are two significant areas of focus for HMC. Services include the freestanding Hamilton Ambulatory Surgery Center, Hamilton Diagnostics Center, and Bradley Wellness Center, as well as a Level II trauma center, Peeples Cancer Institute, Heart & Vascular program (including open heart surgery), Hamilton Spine Health and Sport, Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and more.

About Vitruvian Health

Vitruvian Health, formerly Hamilton Health Care System, is a not-for-profit, fully integrated health system

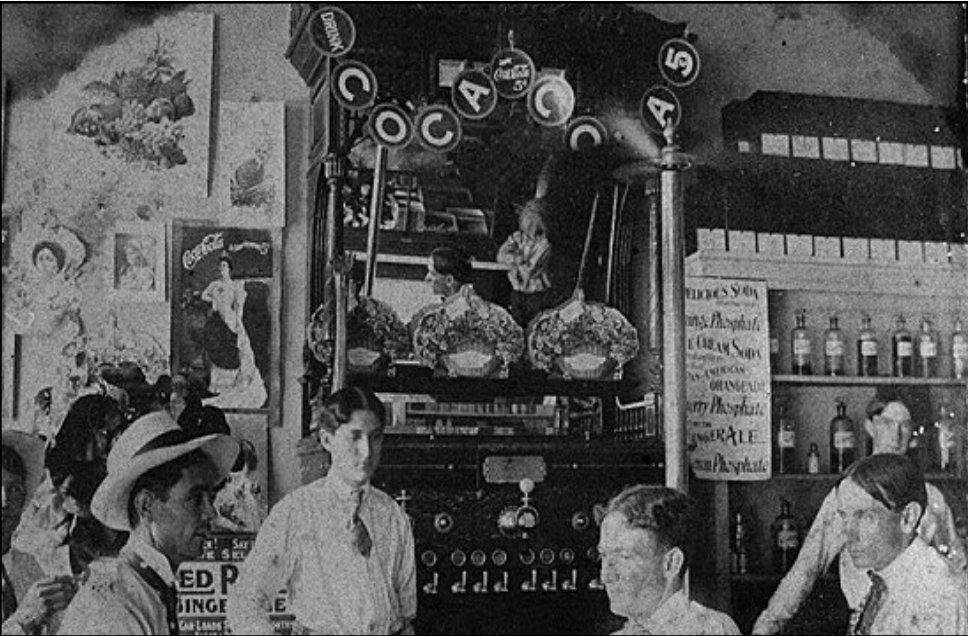


From left, Katie McCreery-Scarbor, AuD and Purnima Nighat Kabir, MD.

serving the Northwest Georgia and Southeast Tennessee regions. Vitruvian includes Hamilton Medical Center in Dalton, Ga., and Bradley Medical Center in Cleveland, Tenn., affiliated physician practices, walk-in care centers, retirement and skilled nursing centers, a diagnostic center, a cancer institute, an institute for children with developmental delays, and more. Known for its advanced care and personalized service, Vitruvian Health offers innovative treatment options in state-of-the-

art facilities while maintaining a compassionate, friendly and tranquil healing environment.

The Vitruvian name draws from the organization’s recognizable da Vinci-inspired Vitruvian Man icon, which has been a prominent part of Hamilton’s logo since 1976. Da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man represents harmony, balance, and the interconnectedness of all aspects of health, perfectly aligning with Hamilton’s integrated system of care.



Chastain Brothers Drug Store, Calhoun, ca. 1906-1907: Interior of Chastain Brothers Drugstore located at the corner of Court Street and Park Avenue. It was operated by Alonzo and Ben Chastain. Note the signs and the soda fountain. Later names for this same firm are Chastain & Orr Drug Co., Chastain & Morris Drugstore, and Calhoun Drug Co. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Traveling Store - Calhoun, 1898: Men pose for a photograph beside a traveling store. The store was actually a small enclosed wagon which could be filled with various wares. Note the signs on the vehicle which advertise products. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



976 HWY. 53 WSW | CALHOUN

DEMO DAY

SATURDAY, MAY 2

6 P.M.

•FOOD

•FIREWORKS DEMO
AFTER DARK

•BRING LAWN CHAIR

•FUN FOR WHOLE FAMILY!



Bowers joins Hamilton Health – Calhoun

VITRUVIAN AT HAMILTON MEDICAL

Board-certified family medicine physician Ted Bowers, MD, has joined Hamilton Health - Calhoun, part of Vitruvian Health.

Originally from Blue Ridge, Ga., Bowers earned his bachelor's in microbiology from the University of Georgia. He attended the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta and completed his residency in family medicine at Montgomery Center for Family Medicine in Greenwood, S.C.

He is a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians.

Bowers sees patients of all ages for a range of conditions. He emphasizes that everyone needs a primary care physician, even if they aren't experiencing negative symptoms.

"Everyone can benefit from an ongoing relationship with a primary care physician who knows them well and who they trust," he said. "When problems do arise, it's a lot easier to quickly and effectively formulate a plan of care because we already know the patient's history. You don't have to wait until you're sick to have

a relationship with a physician."

Bowers says that compassionate care starts with taking time with patients and being an effective listener.

"When patients come to see me, they can expect that I will take time to get to know them, listen to their concerns and provide professional care that is based on sound research and data," says Bowers.

Bowers says the most rewarding part of his job as a family medicine physician is the relationships he gets to build with people. "Getting to know people over the course of years or decades, about their personal lives and families, and seeing them have successes in their healthcare journey is the most rewarding part for me," he says.

To make an appointment with Bowers at Hamilton Health – Calhoun, call 706-529-3025.

About Hamilton Health – Calhoun

Hamilton Health – Calhoun is a comprehensive healthcare facility, located at 215 Curtis Parkway N.E. (behind Walgreens and next to McEntire's Driving Range. The 34,000-square-foot facility offers family medicine, internal medicine,

walk-in care, rehabilitation, cardiology, diabetes treatment, endocrinology, general surgery, neurology, pain management, pulmonology and gastroenterology. Patients can also receive lab work and imaging services including X-rays, 3D mammograms, ultrasound, bone density tests and echocardiograms. Hamilton Health – Calhoun provides comprehensive, expert medical care enhanced by advanced technologies and innovative treatment modalities serving adults and children ages 2 and older. Most insurances are accepted, including Medicare and Medicaid.

About Vitruvian Health

Vitruvian Health, formerly Hamilton Health Care System, is a not-for-profit, fully integrated health system serving the Northwest Georgia and Southeast Tennessee regions. Vitruvian includes Hamilton Medical Center in Dalton, Ga., and Bradley Medical Center in Cleveland, Tenn., affiliated physician practices, walk-in care centers, retirement and skilled nursing centers, a diagnostic center, a cancer institute, an institute for children with developmental delays, and more. Known for its advanced



Ted Bowers, MD

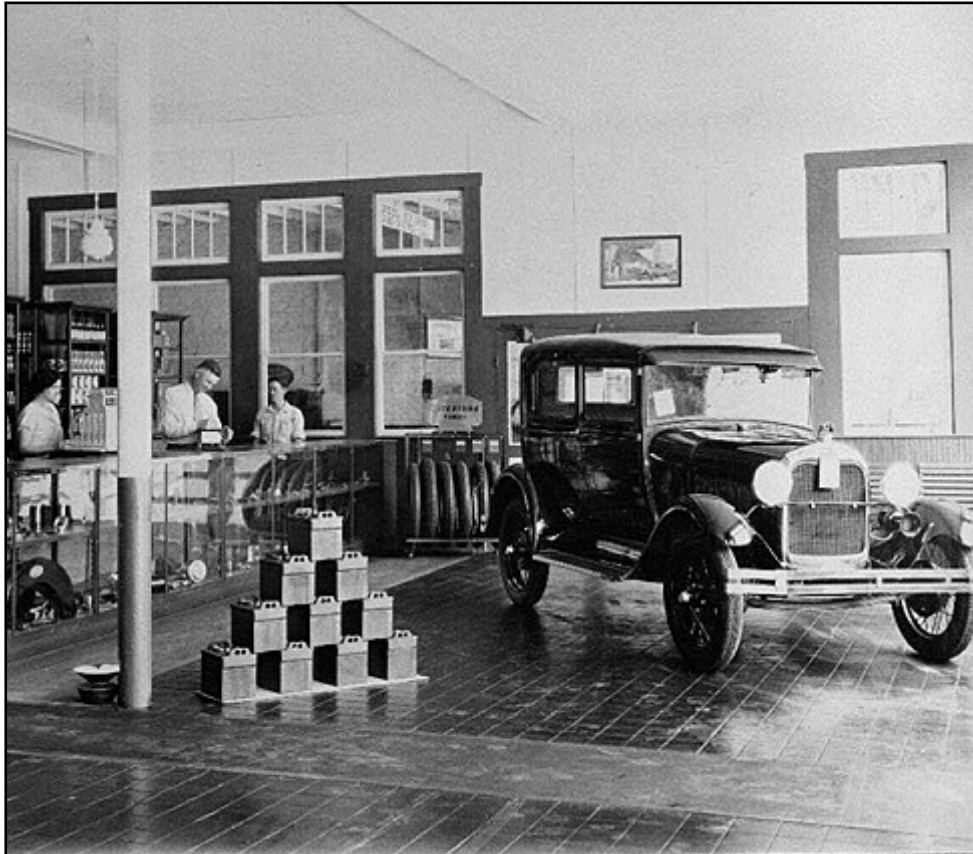
care and personalized service, Vitruvian Health offers innovative treatment options in state-of-the-art facilities while maintaining a compassionate, friendly and tranquil healing environment.

The Vitruvian name draws from the organization's recognizable da Vinci-inspired Vitruvian Man icon, which has been a prominent part of Hamilton's logo since 1976. Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man represents harmony, balance, and the interconnectedness of all aspects of health, perfectly aligning with Hamilton's integrated system of care.

Gordon County through the years



Fox Motor Company, Calhoun, 1928: Fox Motor Company located on South Wall Street. This Ford dealership was owned by James Carl Fox. Note the early gasoline pumps. In the late 1950s this dealership became Prater Ford, Inc. Today the building houses Owen Security Solutions. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Fox Motor Company, Calhoun: 1929. Interior of the Fox Motor Company located on South Wall Street. This Ford dealership was owned by James Carl Fox. Later it became Prater Ford, Inc. Note the Ford Victoria on display. Left to right: Mary Champion (cashier), Mr. Fox, and an unknown man. Today the building houses Owen Security Solutions. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Fox Motor Company, Calhoun, 1920: Interior of the Fox Motor Company located on South Wall Street at the time of its opening. This Ford dealership was owned by James Carl Fox. Later it became Prater Ford, Inc. Note: the early Ford automobile. Today the building houses Owen Security Solutions. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Hearse, Calhoun, 1936: Sears & Scovill Cadillac hearse parked in front of the Jackson Funeral Home located on Piedmont Street. C.S. Jackson was the owner of the funeral home. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)

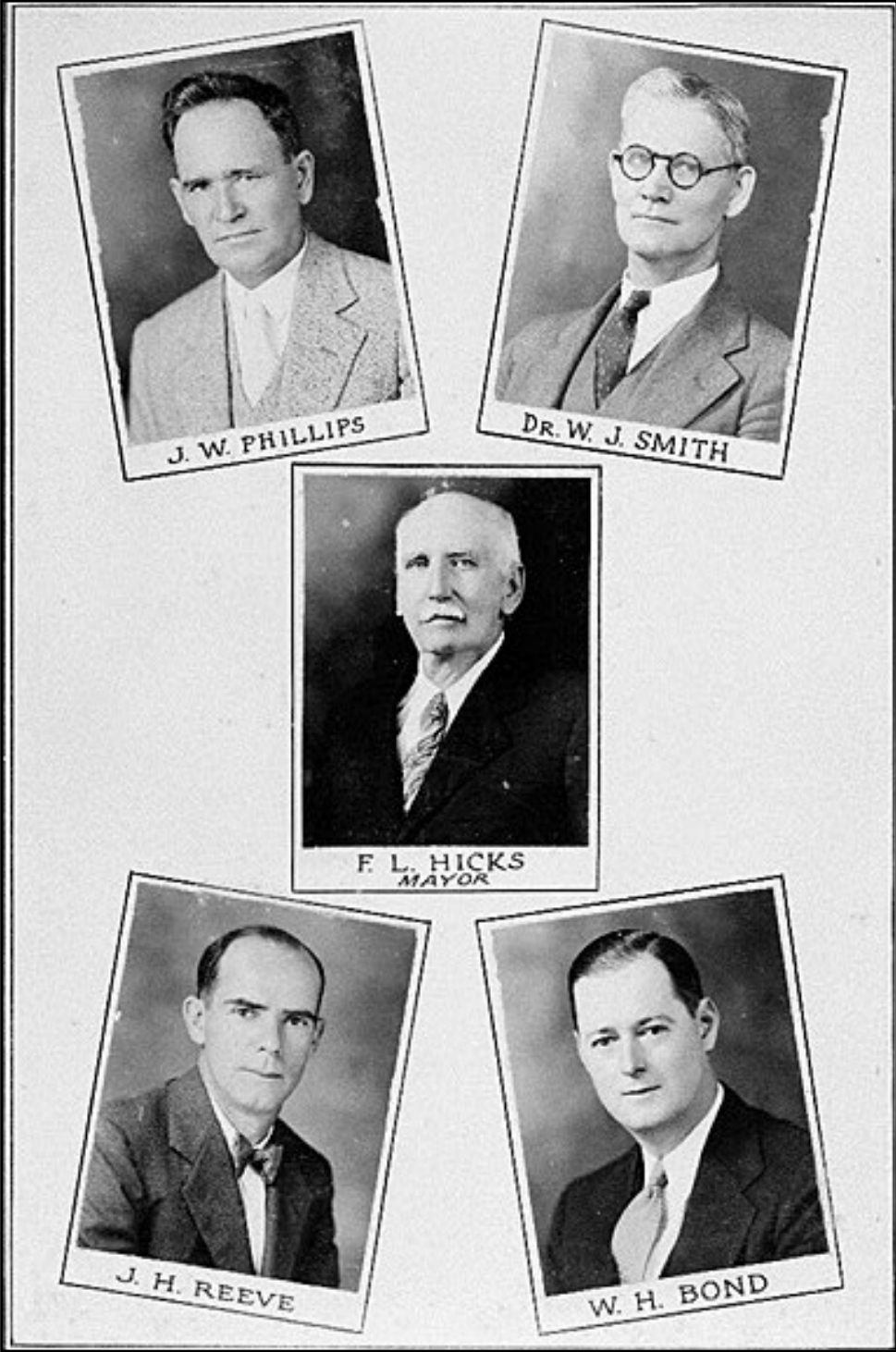


CS Jackson Hearse, Calhoun, 1936: C.S. Jackson, owner of the Jackson Funeral Home, poses for a photograph beside his Sears & Scovill Cadillac hearse. The hearse was parked in front of the funeral home on Piedmont Street. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)



Resaca crowd, 1888: Crowd gathered on the side of a mountain near the railroad tracks. Several of the men appear to be wearing uniforms and to have musical instruments. The group was there for some sort of celebration or reunion. (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.)

Calhoun-Gordon County Government Through the Years



Calhoun, 1930s. Composite showing the men who served as mayor and aldermen of Calhoun. F.L. Hicks held the office of mayor. The aldermen were J.W. Phillips, Dr. W.J. Smith, J.H. Reeve, W.H. Bond. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Calhoun, 1889. Gordon County Courthouse under construction. Two men associated with the building of the courthouse were William Dowling and W.L. Hillhouse. The courthouse was demolished in 1961. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Calhoun, 1941. Calhoun City Hall on the right and the fire department on the left. A police car and two fire trucks seen in front of the building which was located on Piedmont Street. In 1976 the city hall moved into the building that had housed the U. S. Post Office in Calhoun located on North Wall Street. (PHOTO: VANISHING GEORGIA)

Check out
with added
convenience
and security.

Your Builtwell Debit or Credit Mastercard® works seamlessly with leading digital wallets, including the one on your own smartphone, and it's easy to set up and use!



Add your card in seconds

Just open the app of your choice on your eligible mobile device.



Make purchases faster and easier

Use your device to make fast, easy purchases at stores with contactless card readers and avoid fumbling for your wallet.



Enjoy added security

You never need to show your card or provide your card number to the cashier.

Liberty Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Brandi Owczarz
staff@gordongazettega.com

Liberty Cumberland Presbyterian Church, located on Liberty Road across from the fairgrounds, has one of the richest histories for a church in Gordon County. Formally established in October 1853, the church holds several titles, including the first painted church in Northwest Georgia and the only church in the United States where both Union and Confederates worshipped together in the same service during the Civil War in April 1864.

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church is a Presbyterian body formed during the Great Revival of 1800. The revival caused disagreement within the Presbyterian Church of the United States, over the mechanics of the revival and over allowances the pro-revival faction was willing to make in order to secure ministers for its rapidly expanding following.

These presbyteries, Cumberland in particular, believed the revival to be an extraordinary circumstance, which allowed for exceptions to both educational requirements for ordination and the required subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The faction opposed to the revival dominated. This anti-revival faction took steps to curtail the activities of the revival oriented Presbyteries, who disagreed with several tenants, including the requirement that in order to be ordained, candidates were required to go through a classical education in college, then go to seminary back east in Pennsylvania or other approved seminaries – or even in Scotland, rather than obtain theological education in what was considered “saddleback schools,” or through being taught by ordained ministers.

The disaffected

Presbyterian ministers did not intend to found an independent Presbyterian body. However unintended, the Cumberland faction created this new faction of the Presbyterian faith. The first Cumberland Presbyterian minister to permanently settle in Georgia was the Rev. Samuel Houston Henry, who organized his first church in 1851. Two years later, he formed another church just south of Calhoun in Gordon County, which was the beginning of Liberty Cumberland.

By this time many Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian were beginning to populate the landscape of Northwest Georgia. The Presbyterian Church had organized missions to the Cherokees in Floyd County as early as 1832. They now began to use many of the same recruiting techniques as the Baptists and Methodists, including camp meetings and campgrounds that attracted thousands of people from the surrounding communities. Some of these campgrounds evolved into permanent churches.

Liberty was the second such Cumberland church established in Georgia. The Liberty church, also known as the White Church, soon became a member of the Georgia Presbytery. These early families of Liberty came to this part of Northwest Georgia from Tennessee and North Carolina and settled in the upper reaches of Springtown Valley, a few miles south of Calhoun. In October of 1859, the congregation purchased one acre of land for one dollar from V. H. Cain to erect a meeting house. Additional land was secured in 1860.

During the Civil War, according to the local history, the Rev. Allison Templeton was conducting a spring revival service and a dozen or so Confederate soldiers came into the service and took a seat. The service



was quietly progressing until a company of Union soldiers rode up and entered the church. Rev. Templeton asked the entire congregation to participate in the worship service, including the Federal troops. At the end of the service, when mourners were called, a number of soldiers from both sides came to the mourners’ bench and sat side by side. After the service, both sides rode away in their different directions.

“The little white church has been through periods of prosperity and decline but she is still standing tall and is well

maintained so that more generations can appreciate the service that the little white church has given to this part of North Georgia for over 150 years,” said a historical review of the church..

In May of 1864, Liberty Church was sieged and used as a field hospital for Union Army soldiers. Outside the church in front of a tree, a historical marker is placed at a pit to recognize one of the odder uses of the field hospital.

“In May 1864, while on its way to Kennesaw and Atlanta campaigns, the Army of the North sieged Liberty Church

ABOVE: Liberty Cumberland Presbyterian Church, established in 1853, is located on Liberty Road near the fairgrounds.

INSET: A marker on teh church that tells of its historical significance to Gordon County.

BELOW: An area roped off around a tree that holds body parts of Union soldiers who required amputations after being injured while fighting during the Civil War. .The church was seiged and used as a field hospital in May 1864.

BELOW RIGHT: The sign that marks the burial of body parts amputated at the church, which was being used as a field hospital during the Civil War.

PHOTOS: Historical Marker Database website.

and grounds for use as a field hospital,” said sign reads. “During the occupation, numerous soldiers suffered the

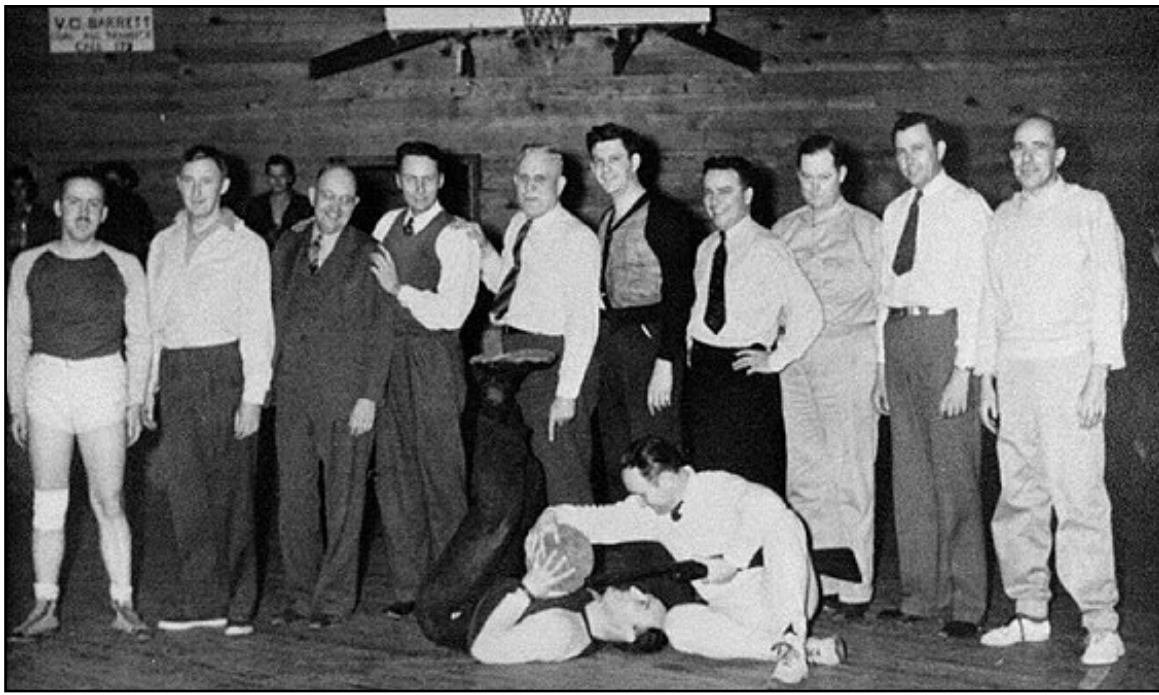
trauma of amputation. These body parts were buried in a common pit. This plot shall forever remain sacred and holy.”



Elect
Eddie Hall
State Senate 54th district
Gordon•Whitfield•Murray
Eddie Will Work for:
Property Tax reform
Environmental Protection
Improved Education
More LOCAL Control
Giving YOU a Voice
Taxes have STEADILY gone UP.
Can we AFFORD more of the same?
Time for a CHANGE!

PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

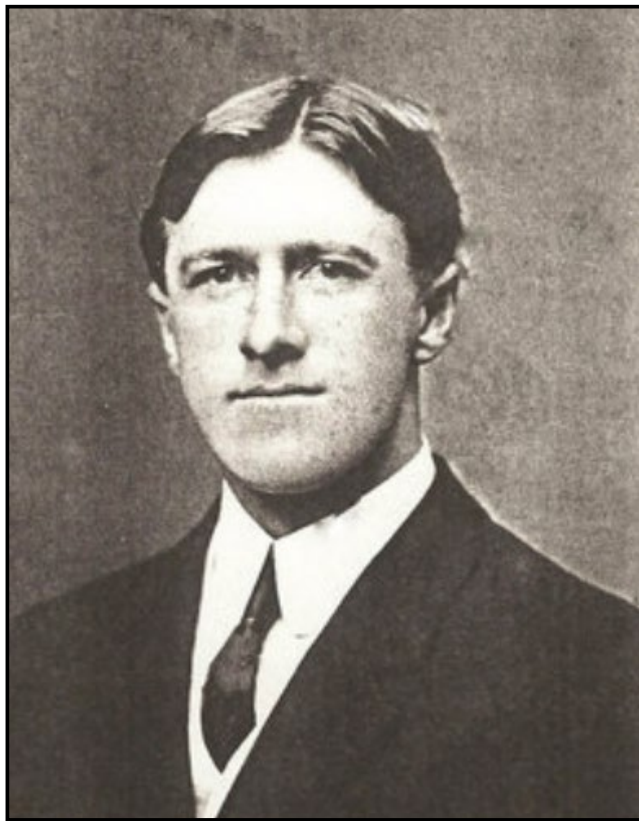
Healthcare Through the Years in Gordon County



Dr. W.D. HALL PARTICIPATES IN ROTARY BASKETBALL GAME: Calhoun, 1939. Members of the Rotary Club pose for a photograph at their basketball game. Standing, left to right: Dr. W.D. Hall, Estes David, J.H. Starr, Sam Powers, Lawrence Moss, Jack Fincher, Dr. J.E. Billings, W.F. Bond, Clyde Evans, Skipper House. In front, Luke Spink, Bill Gardner. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



DR. ROBERT WALTER AT QUARTERBACK CLUB MEETING:
Calhoun, 1974. Past chairmen of the Quarterback Club and guests
pose for a photograph. This club was interested in the sports program
at Calhoun High School. Standing left to right: Jim Tamplin, Rep.
Thomas L. Shanahan, Rodney Harbin, Bill Mathews, Henry Holland,
Jr. George Caron. Seated: John Gunnels, Y. A. Henderson, Jr.,
Thomas J. Brown, Sr., Dr. R. D. Walter, George Chambers. (Photo:
VANISHING GEORGIA)



FAR LEFT: DR. ZEBULON JOHNSTON: Zebulon Johnston became the first doctor of Johnson-Hall Hospital.

LEFT: A COUNTRY DOCTOR: Redbud, 1898. Dr. V. Langford poses with his wife, Florence, and son, Otto, for a photograph. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)

PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT



**KURT
SUTHERLAND
COUNTY
COMMISSIONER
DISTRICT 4**

**WORKING TO COMPLETE
INFRASTRUCTURE
IMPROVEMENTS TO KEEP
GORDON SAFE**

Community Legacy

Stephens School students excelled in both academics and athletics in mid-20th Century

Brandi Owczarz
staff@gordongazettega.com

The Calhoun City School system has seen a lot of changes since opening in 1901, but none as drastic as the one that segregated the school system during the 1950's and 1960's.

According to the 1976 Bicentennial History of Gordon County Georgia, in 1951, the Georgia Legislature approved funding for the Minimum Foundation for Public Education Act to improve the quality of education for Georgia students, which greatly affected the Calhoun City Schools and Gordon County Schools. The Gordon County system became eligible for money for building construction funds, but with several schools that needed consolidating, there was not enough money for all the facilities needed. The Calhoun system had the facilities but not construction funds. The two systems boards of education met and decided to combine their resources and a 20-year contract was signed. A new facility was built behind Calhoun High School in 1956 and students from the county schools of Belwood, Liberty, Oostanaula, Plainville, Resaca, Sonoraville and Sugar Valley were transported by the county system to Calhoun for their high school education.

This contract included a plan of education for the black students of both school systems with a new school being built on West Line Street in Calhoun.

The county furnished transportation, and the new school, which housed grades kindergarten through 12, was called the Stephens School in honor of Professor W.P. Stephens, a local principal during the 1930's.

"The original building was on the top of the hill, where the community center is now," said local historian Jim Lay. "It was a Rosenwald School."

According to his biography, Julius Rosenwald was a Jewish-American clothier who became part owner of Sears, Roebuck and Company. In the early 20th century in the South, he partnered with African-American leader and educator Booker T. Washington, the then-president of Tuskegee Institute, for the Rosenwald School project, which built more than 5,000 schools, shops and teacher homes in the U.S., primarily the South. The need arose from the ongoing underfunding at the time of public education for African-American children in the South, being required to attend segregated schools.

Rosenwald was the founder of the Rosenwald Fund. He contributed seed money for many schools and other philanthropic causes. He required local communities to raise matching funds to encourage their commitment to these projects. To promote collaboration between black and white people, Rosenwald required communities to commit public funds and/or labor to the schools, as well as to contribute additional cash donations

after construction. With the program, millions of dollars were raised by African-American rural communities across the South to fund better education for their children and white school boards had to agree to operate and maintain the schools.

"It was a matched program that the community paid for part of the school," said Lay. "That's how we got the building at the top of the hill that was eventually tore down for the community center to be built.

Stephens was a very successful school under the leadership of principal, Dr. Bettie Smith.

"The big name at Stephens School was Dr. Bettie Smith," said Lay. "She was the principal, and just a fine school person. She was a doctor and got her degree from Columbia College. She was a wonderful leader. I had a chance to work with her. She had a wonderful school program.

In 1967, the Stephens School was reorganized for grades five and six. The Stephens School had a superior record over the State of Georgia among black schools, due primarily to the leadership of Dr. Bettie M. Smith, the principal of the school from 1951 until its closing in 1967.

Students who attended the Stephens School won many literary, athletic



Under the direction of principal Dr. Bettie Smith, Stephens School had a superior record over hte State of Georgia among black schools.

and academic honors and the school played a vital role in the local black community. A federal court order required the integration of both black and white students beginning in the 1965-1966 school year and students were given the choice of where they would go to high school that served their area.



Boys Basketball

Once again we find Coach S.W. Jones trying to pilot our boys to another successful season. se are seeking our fifth consecutive championship in the district. Last year we lost an entire first team. This year Robert Hutcherson and Darnell Tripp, the Captain, are playing their final games for Dear Ole S.H.S. However we feel we have some very good material that will replace those who have gone.E. Curtis,A. Gargan, B. Curtis, J. Egan, J. Reese E. Tripp. M. Pritchett and M.Camp bell are on the squad.

Pep Squad

The Pep Squad, directed by Mrs. Jefferson, has kept up the noise for our basketball season. Did you see their gay "beanies"? The members of the group are Ruby James, Mamie Aker, T.Aker, Lavern Aker, Beatrice Hayes, Marie Boone, Thelma Aker, Shirley Boone, and Mary Hunt.
"Rah-rah-rah-rah"





Queen Attendants

Queenly honors this year went to Joan Johnson, "Miss Stephens High", a Sophomore, "Miss Elementary" Laverne Steale of the Fourth Grade, "Miss Primary", Yoland Christian, First Grade. Shown at the left are the queens and their court. Marie Perry, Ninth Grade, Opal Harris, Eighth Grade, Eleanor Steele, Eleventh Grade and Juanita Aker, Senior.
The queens were crowned by Mr. Strickland during the opening ceremonies of the basketball season. We are proud of our cue queens.

Twirlers

These fine little lassies are the source of our entertainment between our basketball games.If you did not see them in action you missed a treat. We are looking to the future to see them with a marching band. They are directed by Mrs. Lester and Mrs. Jefferson.



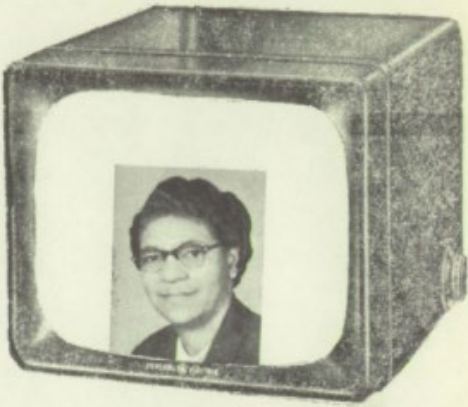
Also in 1956, Stephens School also recognized Queen Attendants and Twirlers.

Students in 1956 were offered athletic opportunities at Stephens School, including basketball and cheer.

Class Prophecy

S.H.S. Television program
A.B.G. Ch-12
January 6th, 1966 3p.m.

Eye witness new stars, new acts, in all entertainment!
Eye witness new experiences in mathematics, sports, trades and other activities,



The Class of '56

Margaret A. Golden	Movie Actress
Darnell Tripp	Stenographer
Janie M. Goudlock	Model
Edna L. Curtis	Beautician
Mamie J. Aker	Telephone Operator
Samuel Hayes	Professor
Beatrice Hayes	Musician
Beeston Aker	Professional Baseball Player
Robert Hutcherson	Mechanic
James Boone	Band Leader
Bobby Johnson	Electrical Engineer
Juanita Aker	Typist
Frank Childers	Opera Singer
Joseph Pritchett	Mathematician

By Edna Curtis

sweethearts



In 1958, the Stephens High School yearbook, The Hilltopper, recognized couples who were dating.

In the 1956 Hilltopper, the Senior Superlatives were announced for the Class of '56.

Protecting History

Stephens School campus designated as Local Historic District

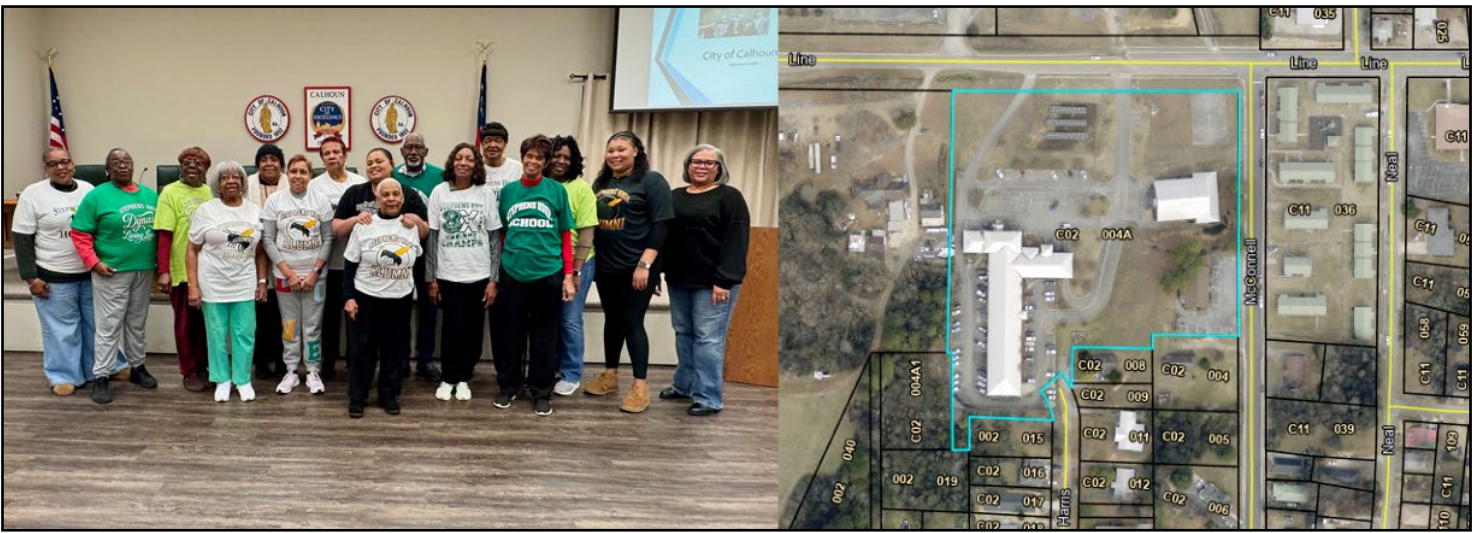
Brandi Owczarz
staff@gordongazettega.com

Back on Monday night, Jan. 12, 2026, at the regular meeting of the Calhoun City Council, the members approved a request from the Historic Preservation Commendation recommending approval of the designation of the Stephens School Campus, which encompasses the corner area of McConnell Road and West Line Street where the current City Utilities building is located, as a Local Historic District.

Gordon County Civic Club, Inc. (GCCC) submitted a request for designation of the Stephens School Campus and the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the request, including a designation report that included a physical description of the campus, statements of historical and cultural significance, maps identifying proposed district boundaries and photographs. There were also letters of support presented from African American churches and community leaders.

“Based on the documentation presented, the Commission finds that Stephens School Campus is historically significant for its association with public education and community development in Calhoun and Gordon County during the mid-twentieth century,” said Lacey Fuquea, director of the Historic Preservation Commission.

According to Fuquea, the campus originated with the construction of the Rosenwald Elementary School in 1929, made possible through Rosenwald Foundation assistance matched by local contributions of land, labor and funding. The site later expanded to serve as Gordon County’s only Black high school during segregation, reflecting an important period in the City’s educational history.”



A crowd of alumni from Stephens High School, along with family and supporters, were on hand for the vote to designate the campus of Stephens School, right, as a Local Historic District.

In 1929, Rosenwald Elementary School for Colored People, serving grades 1-8, was built with \$2,500 Rosenwald Foundation funding matched and exceeded by local Black residents. In the 1940s, the school expanded into Stephens Junior School, serving grades 9-11. From 1951-1966, it expanded into Stephens High School, adding 12th grade, and served as the county’s only Black high school until desegregation.

“The Commission further finds that the campus is historically significant for events associated with interscholastic athletics,” said the Commission’s letter of recommendation. “The Stephens School Gymnasium was the site of the first state championship victory in Gordon County history in 1952, and the campus remained associated with multiple state and district championships in basketball and track and field in subsequent years. These events are historically associated with the campus and contribute to its significance as a place where community and school life were closely connected.”

According to Seania Stephens, Executive COO & Executive Trustee of GCCC, the Stephens High Hornets became the first school in Gordon County to win a State Championship Title with the Boys’ Basketball team winning the GIA Class C State Championship. That same year, the Girl’s team were the State Runner-up. The tournament was held at the Stephens High Gymnasium, still located on the campus, which was the first indoor gym built for Black students in North Georgia.

From 1952-1961, Stephens High had eight State Basketball Championships and four State Track & Field Championships.

According to the request from GCCC, the Stephens High Campus has met legal and preservation compliance, including the City of Calhoun Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Georgia Historic Preservation Act, the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Register Criteria.

At that night’s City Council meeting, a crowd of alumni from Stephens High School were on hand for the vote. Seania Stephens mentioned

that the honor was fitting with this year being the 60th anniversary of the closing of Stephens High School.

“Some of these people sitting here had insurmountable odds,” said Stephens. “Maude Chattam is still one of the leading basketball scorers in Gordon County. She revolutionized girls’ sports. These people produced us, so the greatness didn’t stop. We literally went from a plantation to the podium and we did it with grace. I just thank every one of them and all of our history that we’ve had. We want to celebrate (the alumni) and acknowledge all of their contributions to this county. We thank (the Council) for acknowledging us.”

Stephens said the group would like to turn the gymnasium on the campus into a museum.

“We are aware of the history that goes along with Stephens School,” said Mayor Jimmy Palmer. “Major accomplishments, especially in athletics. We certainly want to approve the recommendation.”

The recommendation was unanimously approved.

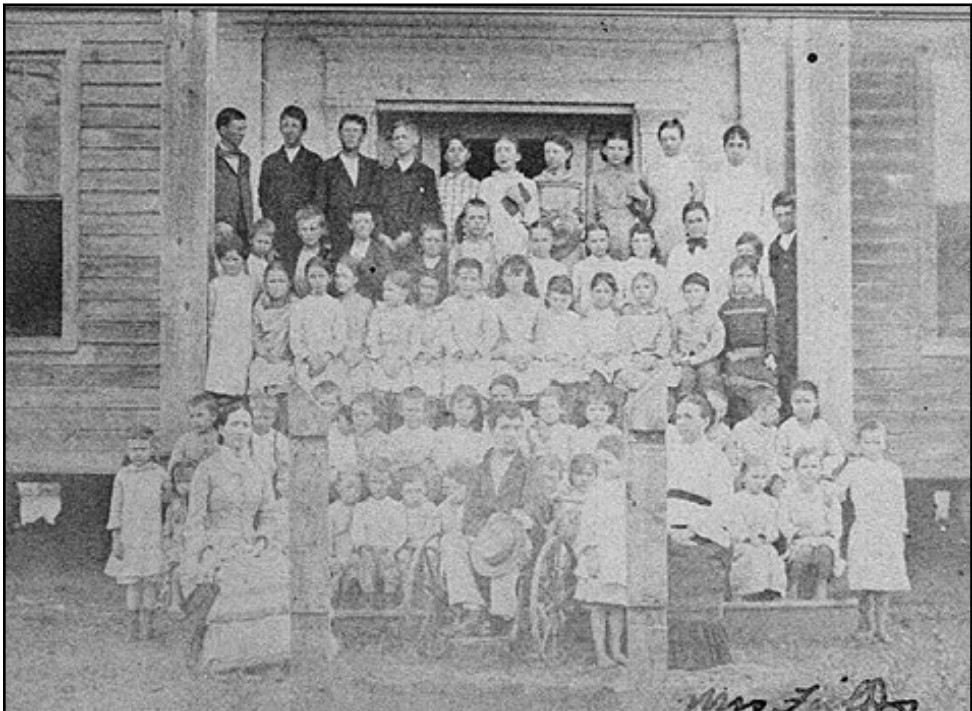
Gordon County Education Through the Years



Near Dew’s Pond, ca. 1909. Students at Gum Springs School pose for a photograph in front of the school. The school was located east of Calhoun.(Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Calhoun, 1919. Members of the graduating class of Calhoun High School. Front row, left to right: Johnnie Mae Eaves, Leone Tribble, Mary Johnson, Alice Westfield, Miriam Hall, Bonnie Shellhorse. Back row: Grady Miller, Mac Ruddell, Varner Neal, Joe Gordon, George Littlefield, Bates Reed, Jether King. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Calhoun, 1886. Students and teachers pose for a photograph in front of the private school operated by Mrs. M. E. Fields which was located on North Wall Street. The school was also known as North Georgia Seminary. Note the young man sitting in a wheelchair. In the foreground Mrs. M. E. Fields is sitting at the right and Laura Reeve at the left. (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)



Photograph of Calhoun High School graduating class, Calhoun, Gordon County, Georgia, ca. 1910-1912 (Photo: VANISHING GEORGIA)

Here for All of Your Needs

Combine home & auto.
Great service, better savings.



Insurance Made Easy

Kent Chapman, Agent
108 Court St.
Downtown Calhoun
706-629-2274

