

## Tribute Luncheon for African-American Business Leaders



Honorees received awards featuring the Old Courthouse provided by The DeKalb Conventions & Visitor's Bureau

### Highlights Past Accomplishments, Future Hopes

By Nikki Hettinger

The elegant Old Superior Courtroom shone in the late morning sun, the light streaming in through arched windows and glistening off the three-foot-tall glass centerpiece vases that adorned the elegantly black-clothed tables in this majestic marble meeting room. Smooth jazz sounds filled the air and mingled with the chatter of acquaintances and associates greeting each other upon arrival.

On Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the **DeKalb History Center** held its inaugural **Annual Black History Month Celebration**, titled "A Salute to African-American Entrepreneurs," which honored six distinguished African-American business leaders for their significant contributions to the community. The event

was held from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Old Courthouse on the Square.

The atmosphere was festive with music by the **Clark Atlanta University Alumni Jazztet**, and the space was filled to its 150-person capacity with elected officials, business leaders, academics, and other prominent members of the county and its environs. History Center Executive Director **Melissa Forgey** warmly welcomed the group, touching upon some of the thoughts and emotions that go into planning a celebration of African-American accomplishments, and emphasizing that black history "should be celebrated all the time." **Rev. William Flippen** followed with an inspiring invocation that cited poignant freedom songs and quoted notable African-Americans.

District Five DeKalb County Commissioner **Lee N. May** was on hand to present the awards to the following honorees:

**Leicester (Bill) Allen**, an educator and entrepreneur who established Academy of Detroit North (now Academy of America) and Camp Exposure with the goal of fostering minority business ownership and providing business education for future leaders;

**Robert L. Brown, Jr.**, President and CEO of the highly respected architectural firm of RL Brown & Associates, Inc. and a dedicated participant in numerous community programs that help advance education, history, and the arts;

**Carolyn Jernigan Glenn** and **Dr. Earl D.**

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## New Board Members

The History Center held its Annual Meeting on March 27. We elected new officers and five new Board Members. Meet our new Directors.

**Melvin Bettis** is Vice President at the Bank of North Georgia. He is originally from Columbus, Georgia, and has

lived in and around DeKalb County for many years. He is serving on the DHC board to stay informed about DeKalb and learn more about its history and community.

**Jane Grabowski** was born and raised in DeKalb County. She

attended Birmingham-Southern College in Alabama and married a pitcher for the Atlanta Crackers. She is a former teacher, assistant principal and principal and has worked at Fernbank Elementary.

**John Keys** is the Di-

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#### **Executive Committee**

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Contributors to this issue include:  
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Mediaworks, Melissa Forgey, Paul  
Graham and Nikki Hettinger.

## Living in Decatur During WW II

*Bert Richardson and his family lived at 203 Erie Avenue in Decatur. He began keeping a diary on October 31, 1942, and kept writing until the end of WWII. The diary was acquired by DHC last fall through the generous support of Harry Stillwell. His wife's name was Martha and his sons were Jim and Bob. One of the new activities that consumed their time was keeping chickens for eggs. The experience was a novelty for Decaturites. These are some excerpts from his diaries.*

Sunday, November 1, 1942: As usual, I read the football news and digested the war bulletins while Martha and the boys were at Sunday school.

Monday, November 2, 1942: My chicken enterprise paid first dividends – two fryers for dinner.... Speaking of dividends, I should mention the weekly basket of fertilizer which I have been scattering around the shrubs and the lawn. I told Martha that I might keep all 39 chickens for a fertilizer factory.

Thursday, November 26, 1942: Thanksgiving night! Martha and I are spending it by ourselves, as Bob is off to practice with his orchestra and Jim is having his first date. That was such an occasion for Jim that we let him take the car. We might be anxious about that, except that the girl and their destination, a dance at the Glass home, are both nearby.

Wednesday, December 16, 1942: Bob brought bad news from school – a deficiency card in plane geometry, to add to a previous one in Latin. Both, I think, are the result of too many outside activities.

Sunday, January 24, 1943: I have changed my mind about going to church because it looks as if it might rain any minute. Instead I have been doing the chicken chores, some kitchen things, and flattening the weekly crop of tin cans for the de-tinning collection. We have a market basket of the flattened cans on the back porch.

Tuesday, February 2, 1943: The important event of the day was the first egg from our pullets! ... Jim looked when he fed the chickens tonight and there was the egg! ... It is small, not much of an egg, but I am proud of this maiden effort by one of the flock.

Saturday, March 13, 1943: Waited almost an hour at the AAA this morning while they searched for my authorization to buy chicken wire. Then, when I had it, none of the hardware stores had the small amount that I needed. Everybody has gone in for chickens!

The pullets are performing almost too well – our icebox is getting full of eggs. Today's production was eleven eggs, the highest total yet. Obviously, this family is going to have to change over to an egg-eating crowd.

Monday, March 15, 1943: At lunch in Herren's, we were served peanut butter as a substitute for the usual butter, now a scarce article. Coffee is almost always weak – the restaurants get limited supplies and try to stretch them; second cups have been out for a long time.

Tuesday, April 13, 1943: Martha has gone to a meeting of the day air raid wardens, mostly ladies. She is an enthusiastic Red Cross worker and puts in a large share of each Monday at the headquarters working on bandages. She is somewhat less enthusiastic about her job as a warden but dutifully patrols her beat (the sidewalk in front of our house and the Hodges') whenever a daylight alarm sounds. She says that she is Mrs. Hodges' private air raid warden.

Friday, June 11, 1943: Today's war news: Mr. Garner has a goat! I walked home from the streetcar with him, and he stopped to pull up weeds along the way. The goat likes weeds better than grass. Mr. Garner is allergic to cow's milk, and had been going to considerable trouble and expense to get goat's milk, finally decided to have his own private factory.

## Correction!

In a previous issue, we listed another individual incorrectly from the historic photo of some of the founders of the Historical Society. Included in the picture was Roba Boynton Goss Ansley. Thank you Elizabeth Allen for setting the record straight!

### In Memoriam

**Marie Rutland Topple**

# Upcoming Events

## Time Capsule to be Opened in Tucker

**Saturday, May 10, 12:00 p.m. Time Capsule Opening.** The Main Street Tucker Alliance is hosting the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Tucker Day Celebration. The time capsule will be opened at noon by the Tucker Historical Society, the DeKalb County Board of Health and the DeKalb History Center.

In 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the bill making Alaska a state. Stereo records went on sale for the first time. Elizabeth Taylor was wrapping up her third divorce. In Tucker, Georgia, residents were sealing a time capsule into the wall of a new health center. Now, 50 years later, the time capsule will be opened.

The Tucker Day Celebration is known for its offering of live music, food, arts, crafts, children's activities, and a parade. Festivities begin at 9 a.m. and last until 4 p.m. For general information about the celebration call Honey Van De Kreke at (770) 934-8935 or visit [www.tuckerday.com](http://www.tuckerday.com).

## Decatur Arts Festival

**Saturday, May 24, 10:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m. "Mapping DeKalb County."** At the Old Courthouse on the Square. The DeKalb History Center will showcase a portion of its map collection in "Mapping DeKalb County," a one-day exhibit during the Decatur Arts Festival. The exhibit demonstrates the ways DeKalb County geography has been represented from its beginnings in 1821 all the way to 2008.

Maps are created and used for many purposes. The exhibit includes insurance maps for fires and floods, school maps from 1937 and 1975, topographic maps, tax maps, city maps, and more. There is also a map of a proposed commuter rail system to circle Atlanta—dated 1952.

**Sunday, May 25, 12:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m. Southern Order of Storytellers.** At the Old Courthouse on the Square. As part of the Literary Arts Festival, we are sponsoring storytellers in the Courthouse, alternating with the activities outside in the Gazebo. Please check the Decatur Arts Alliance website for complete details at [www.decatursalliance.org](http://www.decatursalliance.org).

**1:00 p.m.** Three storytellers share the stage. Audrey Galex delights listeners with tales that celebrate many cultures and reflect her Jewish heritage and travels in the Middle East. LaDoris Bias-Davis uses her theater background to engage, educate and entertain audiences in the U.S., Caribbean & S. America. Eenee Ferrano's repertoire includes personal stories growing up in a Catholic family and stories from the time when animals could talk.

**3:00 pm** Storytelling continues with Ferial Feldman who says "all the world's magic comes from the mouth," whether from a stage, sitting with friends, or rockin' on the porch with family, and Grace Hawthorne, whose newest one-woman show is The Gift, a 9/11 tribute to the New York spirit and anyone who ever made a sacrifice for something they loved.

## Log Cabin Storytelling: June & July

**Wednesdays, June—July, 10:00—11:30 a.m.** At the historic Biffle Cabin, located at 720 Trinity Place. Fran Frantz presents storytelling and frontier crafts "with a twist." Mrs. Frantz is a local historian and enthusiastic storyteller who weaves fascinating tales of pioneer life including children's chores, entertainment, bartering, and science. The programs are open to children ages 6—12. Ages 4—5 may attend if accompanied by an adult. The cost is \$6 per session. **Tickets are required; watch your mail for more information.**

Wednesdays: June 11, Candle Making; June 18, Pottery; June 25, Open Hearth Cooking; July 2, Weaving; July 9, Butter Churning; July 23, Corn Husk Dolls; July 30, Ice Cream

## Volunteers

Many thanks to the individuals who have volunteered recently:

Justine Fletcher

Rebecca Landel-Hernandez

Don Morrison

Steve Hanson

Nikki Hettinger

John Woodly

DeKalb Ambassadors:

Jane Frisbie

Albert L. Lewis

Jeri Moore

Sara Richardson

## Archives

Much of the work performed in the archives is done by interns and volunteers. We are working on a comprehensive inventory of the archives and their contribution is significant.

**Andrew Worth** is a student at Georgia Southwestern University and our Joyce Cohrs intern for the spring semester. He has been entering information about our library books into the computer system. Part of the process involves matching each book to its donation record. Funding for internships comes from Joyce Cohrs, a long-time supporter of the archives.

If you love learning about history and are comfortable writing or using a computer, please consider volunteering in the archives.

## DeKalb History Center's First Annual

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**Glenn**, founders of ACE III Communications, Inc. and publishers of *The Champion*, a vital communications tool for the county's African-American community that grew to become one of the largest black-owned newspapers in the U.S.; and

**Cornell McBride, Sr.**, President and CEO of Decatur-based hair care product distributorship McBride Research Laboratories, Inc. and an advocate who travels extensively to share his business acumen with aspiring entrepreneurs.

In addition, DeKalb County CEO **Vernon Jones** was recognized in absentia with an award for his efforts to preserve the county's history.

The mood of the luncheon was at times humorous, often inspira-



tional, and optimistic and enlightening throughout. Referring to the popularity among women of **Cornell McBride's** hair care product lines, **Commissioner May** commented, "They may not know your name, but they know your work." **McBride**, who received a standing ovation, recounted an anecdote from his child-



*Lester (Bill) Allen*



*Robert L. Brown, Jr.*

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## Black History Month Celebration “A Salute to African-American Entrepreneurs”

hood about a failed attempt to start a pig farm, and stated, “That was a lesson that you learn in business... that you don’t let any obstacle stop you from being successful.”

Many of the honorees had their families present, including **Bill Allen**, who brought his wife of 40 years, his son, his pastor, and some of his staff, and of whom **Commissioner May** noted, “He has decided that he wants to give his knowledge and wisdom to the young people of this nation.” **Robert Brown** made reference to his family, and his deceased mother in particular, whom he recalled telling him, “The quality of your life depends on what you give back to the community,” a statement he said he has embraced wholeheartedly. **Carolyn Glenn**, who also received a standing ovation, thought of her grandfather and the awe he would have felt in knowing of his granddaughter’s being honored in such a ceremony. Her respect for those who came before ex-

tended even further when she quoted Oprah Winfrey, saying, “I am where I am because of the bridges I have crossed.”

**L’Tanya Moore** sang a moving compilation of hymns while guests enjoyed a delightful lunch of spinach salad, chicken Florentine, and tiramisu trifle. **Jon D. Manns**, President of the History Center’s Board of Directors, concluded the proceedings with a brief word of thanks to all involved in the event.

The **DeKalb History Center** is a non-profit, member-based organization that collects, archives, and shares historical documents, photos, and artifacts about DeKalb County.

A video of the event will be available at our website. The photographs accompanying the article are from the video, produced and edited by Edward J. Anderson of Anderson Images.



*Commissioner Lee May, Carolyn Jernigan Glenn & Melissa Forgey*



*Cornell McBride, Sr.*

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## Annual Meeting and Milestones in History

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rector of External Affairs for the Georgia Regional Transit Authority. He received a BA in History from the University of Maryland and also brings extensive knowledge of government operations at all levels. John is also on the Board of Directors of Goodwill of North Georgia and the Decatur Greenspace Commission.

**Kerri Morrin** is the Assistant Vice President at Haven Trust Bank. Kerri is originally from Ohio but has lived in DeKalb County for the last 10 years. Her goal on the board is to help educate the community and preserve the history of DeKalb County. She currently resides in Kirkwood and is a member of the Kirkwood Neighborhood Association.

**Mary K. Jarboe** has a lifelong interest in and love for history. She believes it is vitally important to preserve historical records and make them available to others for research. She was the registrar at Agnes Scott College for 20 years. She is co-president of the Parkwood Garden Club and a member of the Decatur Agnes Scott Alumnae Club.

Treasurer Bob Espy gave the financial reports, Melissa Forgey reported on accomplishments over the last year, and outgoing president Jon Manns turned over the gavel to incoming president Scotty Candler. We also thanked outgoing board members David Ewing, Bill Starr and Darro Willey for their dedication and years of service.

### Milestones In History, Trailblazer Awards

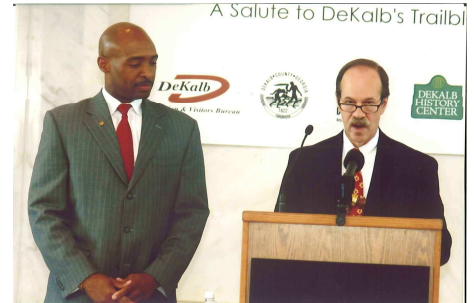
After the business meeting, the "Milestones In History" program was presented. According to Jon Manns, the program brought "the citizens of DeKalb together to celebrate the accomplishments of individuals and organizations that have made this county what it is today. The Milestones in History program is a product of the DeKalb Convention & Visitors Bureau that was executed by Erik Burton of Profile Marketing. We brought together in collaboration the City of Decatur, DeKalb County Government, and the DeKalb History Center to help to shape the program."

Trailblazer Awards were presented to:

- **Scott Candler, Sr.** (accepted by Scotty Candler)
- **Emory University** (accepted by Betty Willis)
- **Narvie Jordon Harris** (accepted by Mrs. Harris)
- **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** (accepted by Bernice King)
- **Manuel J. Maloof** (recognized on behalf of the Maloof Family by Vernon Jones)

Each recipient was honored with a brick outside the Courthouse steps. The awards were presented by the following students from Glennwood Academy in Decatur: **Katie Neil, Amani Bright, Wells Brocklehurst, Yahya Abdi** and **Molly Herman-Gallow.** We thank the students and their principal, Dr. Gloria Lee, for their heartfelt participation. A tremendous number of people helped to make the event a success and we thank every one of them!

The accompanying photographs were provided by Atlanta Mediaworks.

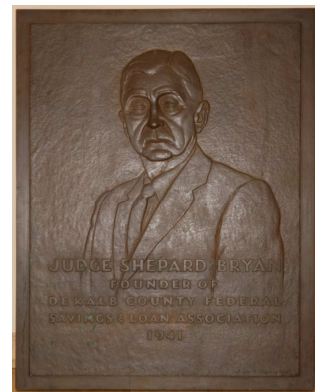


## Bronze Plaque Donated to Museum

Shepard B. Ansley donated a bronze plaque of his father, Judge Shepard Bryan to the History Center. The plaque was created by the artist Julian Lamar and first unveiled in the lobby of the DeKalb Federal Savings and Loan Association in 1958. Ansley's donation included archival materials about Bryan. We are grateful to Shepard and his family for the donation and look forward to displaying it in the future.

Bryan (1871–1970) moved to Atlanta in 1893 and practiced law. He was elected president of the Atlanta Bar Association in 1914 and later appointed Judge of the Superior Court of Fulton County. In 1940, Bryan and his son-in-law, Bonneau Ansley, founded the DeKalb County Federal Savings and Loan Association.

The bank was located in three different buildings in Decatur in rapid succession. It opened for business in 1941 at 117 Clairemont Avenue and moved to 121 E. Ponce de Leon in 1943. A new branch, located at 116 Clairemont Avenue, opened in 1958. This building was designed by architect Albert Howell, who was one of the original bank directors. It was a two-story red brick building with a Neoclassical portico supported by four Doric columns. The doorway was highlighted by a large arched window. That building was last occupied by Prime Bank and was demolished in 1992.



## Swanton House

The historic Swanton House, originally located at 240 Atlanta Avenue, was moved to Adair Park in 1970 to make way for MARTA construction. Built around 1825, it was purchased by Benjamin Franklin Swanton in the 1840s. C&S Bank and Mills B. Lane financed the purchase and moving of the Swanton House. After the move, the house was restored and listed on the National Register in 1978. The house is furnished as a residence with period appropriate pieces. It just received a fresh coat of paint using proceeds from **the Great Decatur Beer Tasting Festival**.



## Join \* Renew \* Give

Collecting, Preserving and Sharing the History of DeKalb County

All funds received through memberships directly support the preservation of DeKalb County history and are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Your generous contribution to the DeKalb History Center will provide you with a year-long membership that includes our quarterly newsletter to keep you informed on all our activities. We hope that you will join our team by either renewing your membership or joining as a first-time supporter.

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### **DeKalb History Center**

Old Courthouse on the Square  
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