

ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA 2000  
2012.3.258

NOTE: This is the last of several entries on disc and the only one with interviews.

*Video opens with white lettering on a black background:* “This presentation, like the Davdison-Arabia Heritage Area Project, is an on-going effort. It represents a summary of our work to date. Additional interviews, events and scenic footage were filmed as a part of our efforts. We plan to use these resources in future versions of this and other presentations.

“Special thanks to Lauren Coffey and his family for the use of their historical film footage showing the work of artisans and quarryman [sic] in the area during the 1930’s. And to the DeKalb Historical Society for archival photographs depicting the people and history of DeKalb County.”

*Camera pans Arabia Mountain and surrounding open area as music plays in background. Voice of Pierre Howard comes in. Music continues softly in background as local officials speak over the video.*

PIERRE HOWARD: We are about to lose the last remnants of our natural heritage in the county. [*Scene change: a close-up of Mr. Howard as he continues his narrative.*] I don’t think we can afford to let that happen.

[*Scene change: video of two white-tailed deer walking along the surface of Arabia Mountain, with the voice of Liana Levetan narrating.*]

LIANA LEVETAN: The unique properties of that piece of land [*Scene change: a close-up of Ms. Levetan as she continues her narrative.*] are something that we could never replace.

[*Scene change: view of Arabia Mountain’s surface, then to a close-up of Cynthia McKinney.*]

CYNTHIA MCKINNEY: This is about preserving a basic human need. [*Scene change: vintage video of people working in the quarry and a vintage still photograph of people picking cotton in the nearby fields.*] That link with who we are and where we come from.

[*Scene change: close-up of Marcia Glenn, Mayor of Lithonia.*]

MARCIA GLENN: I think it's very important that we continue to pass [*Scene change: Ms. McKinney and one or two other adults with a group of children walking on Arabia Mountain.*] this legacy on down to our next generation.

[*Scene change: close-up of James Mackay, former U.S. Congressman from Georgia, former president of the DeKalb Historical Society, and founding chairman of the Georgia Conservancy.*]

JAMES MACKAY: This single project would motivate more Georgians [*Scene change: group of about a dozen people in discussion around tables set in a square.*] to take their natural environment seriously and do what they can through public and private efforts.

[*Scene change: six adults having a discussion on the surface of Arabia Mountain, with voice-over narrative by Max Cleland.*]

MAX CLELAND: I think this can be a win-win situation; [*Scene change: Mr. Cleland talking with two other adults on the surface of Arabia Mountain.*] because if we lose this valuable asset here, you know, nobody gains. But if we keep it, everybody wins.

[*Scene change: camera pans surface of Arabia Mountain, showing horizon and vegetation on and surrounding the mountain. Title appears over the video: "Davidson-Arabia Mt. Heritage Area."*]

[*Scene change: close-up of Pierre Howard, with screen caption "Pierre Howard/Lt. Governor of Georgia, '91-'98."*]

PIERRE HOWARD: When you walk to the top of Davidson-Arabia Mountain, you feel as if you're standing on top of the world.

[*Scene change: camera pans surface of Arabia Mountain, showing horizon and vegetation on and surrounding the mountain.*]

[*Scene change: close-up of Cynthia McKinney, standing on surface of Arabia Mountain, with screen caption "Rep. Cynthia McKinney/United States Congress."*]

CYNTHIA MCKINNEY: The most striking thing is that you can turn in 360 degrees and see only trees.

[*Scene change: Cynthia McKinney, Mayor Marcia Glenn, and unidentified male on top of Arabia Mountain.*]

[*Scene change: close-up of Pierre Howard*]

PIERRE HOWARD: It's as if you are in the mountains somewhere. You don't feel as if you're in the city, and yet you're only twenty minutes from downtown Atlanta. *[Scene change: Two people talking atop Arabia Mountain]* And that's the beauty of this place.

*[Scene change to a video clip of Atlanta—expressway traffic, high-density residential housing, etc.]*

*[Scene change: close-up of Becky Kelley, with screen caption "Becky Kelley/Director, Parks & Recreation—DeKalb Co." The scene shifts to video of children playing on the surface of Arabia Mountain, with Ms. Kelley's voiceover.]*

BECKY KELLY: As everybody knows, Atlanta is growing at such a rapid pace. The urban-sprawl issue is something that we're all grappling with. And when we have such rapidly growing urban environments, our children are growing up without the experience of nature without the interaction of the natural environment. What we see at Arabia is the opportunity to provide a lot of inner-city kids and urbanized kids the experience of nature.

*[Scene change: Close-up of Pierre Howard.]*

PIERRE HOWARD: Today there exists a five-hundred-acre park around Arabia Mountain. *[Pierre Howard's voice continues over the on-screen display of a map of the 535-acre Davidson Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve.]* And what we want to try to do is to preserve some 750 acres that are contiguous to the park. *[Scene change: Camera pans 360 degrees around the horizon, looking out from the top of Arabia Mountain.]* Because when you stand on top of the mountain, you can still look all the way around—it's 360 degrees—and you still don't see any development.

TITLE DISPLAY: "A Heritage of Earth & Stone"

*[Scene change: Close-up of Marcia Glenn, identified as "Mayor - Lithonia, Georgia"]*

MARCIA GLENN: We've lived here for hundreds of years. Our families have lived here for hundreds of years. We've owned land. *[Slideshow of photographs is displayed, showing rural scenes of farming during the past century, as Ms. Glenn's voiceover continues.]* A lot of this was farmland. Back in those days it was very, very difficult for the people that lived here. So they worked so hard to maintain what they had back then, *[Scene change: Video of two adults talking with a group of children on the grounds of the nature preserve.]* and I think it's important or as important for us as a

second or third or fourth generation to continue to pass that on to the next generation so that we won't lose it.

*[Scene change: Close-up of former Georgia Senator Max Cleland.]*

MAX CLELAND: We were settled by Scotch [sic—should be “Scots”] and Irish immigrants in that area, and they had one skill—they could flat cut granite. *[Archival video of quarrymen cutting stone. Most if not all of the workers in the video are of African rather than Scots-Irish descent.]* They were great artisans. And that skill has almost vanished with that generation that—even in the Great Depression that was the artisan skill that they possessed and helped build *[Scene change: Close-up of granite block with inscription, “Welcome to/Lithonia/ City of Granite/Created by the Lithonia Summer Street Festival Committee/May 18, 1996”]* that little town [Lithonia] that I grew up in and helped it flourish *[Close-up of Max Cleland]* and helped create an industry—the granite industry, the rock industry, the crushed-stone industry—*[Archival video of quarry with caption, “Davidson Arabia Mt.—Circa 1930s”]* and helped that flourish here in our state and became known worldwide. It's fascinating how all of that now seems distant and so much in the past. *[Scene returns to close-up of Max Cleland.]* That's just my generation, just my life. *[Contemporary video of adult with Boy Scout troop on the surface of the mountain.]* And think of the kids growing up after the turn of the century. *[Scene returns to close-up of Max Cleland.]* They need to know that story of people coming here and making a living and scratching it out, not just in the earth, but scratching it out out of rock. *[Posed photograph of group of Caucasian male quarry workers, likely Depression-era.]*

*[Scene and narrator change: Photo portrait of John Key Davidson, Sr., with voice of Charlie Davidson narrating.]* My grandfather, John Key Davdison, Sr., came from Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1888, when he was sixteen. *[Close-up of Charlie Davidson, as he continues speaking. Caption reads “Charlie Davidson, Founder, Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve.”]* Many of the Scotch [sic] and many of the Welch [sic] and many of the Irish were coming at that time to the New Country, and he already had a couple of cousins in the Lithonia area. *[Archival photograph of steam locomotive.]* And he rode in the train from New York, he came over. And when he got into town, he had seven cents in his pocket. *[Archival photograph of mules drawing a buggy loaded with stone blocks]* So the next day he got a job and went to work. He was a stonemason. So he got him a mule and a wagon and began to get out paving

blocks. [*Photo of stonecutter working among stacks of granite blocks*] These—all the city streets at that time, what paving was done in the latter 1800s, was all done with paving blocks. And he had learned this trade in Scotland. [*Close-up of Charlie Davidson*] In the early part of the nineteenth century [*Early videos of mules, wagons, quarry workers cutting stone*] the use of these paving blocks was a major thing all over the country. And at one time, I'm told, in Lithonia there were seventeen operating companies, there were 1700 stonecutters, and it was the largest—tonnage-wise—shipping point in Georgia.

TITLE DISPLAY: "A Signature Park"

[*Close-up of Becky Kelly*]

BECKY KELLY: We see Arabia Mountain as becoming an important signature park.

LEON YOUNGER [*Identified onscreen as "Nationally known parks consultant"*]: Signature parks—when you go to any town—I don't care whether it's a small town or a large city or a large county—a signature park means that it has a great balance of natural resources and unique features and offers a real good balance between active and passive space [*Video of two adults leading a group of children in activity on top of Arabia Mountain.*] and serves a wide demographic group of people.

[*Video of group of adults walking through forest around Arabia Mountain.*]

CONNIE STOKES, State Senator, Dist. 43, *first as voice-over for video, then in close-up, with Arabia Mountain in background*: This is a project that will benefit the people of Georgia. It will serve a very, very diverse community; because, even though it's located in South DeKalb, we're right on the Rockdale County line. [*Video of schoolchildren, led by adults, exploring the mountain and surroundings.*] And then if you look at outreach to the metro-area school systems—Gwinnett and Cobb—then you're going to have the diversity of the metro area for participation. And then, of course, we want to really reach out to the rest of the state, because I think this is the kind of project that everyone can benefit from.

PIERRE HOWARD, *first as voice-over for video of Arabia Mountain and then in close-up*: I think what's special about the Arabia Mountain area is that you have a taste of everything that DeKalb County used to be. [*Video of elderly farmer, Mr. Vaughters, standing in a field near the mountain, along with a younger man. Pierre Howard's voice continues over video.*] You've got the Vaughters farm, which will be a part of this

preservation effort, which is the last remaining dairy farm in DeKalb County. [*Video continues, showing farmland, barn, etc., with Pierre Howard's voiceover.*] It's a very beautiful piece of property with large pastures and a lot of hardwoods and the old barn. [*Video changes to old footage of stonecutters and quarry workers.*] You've got the history and the memories of the quarrying industry that came into DeKalb County [*Still photograph of quarry workers, ca. 1920, with a man identified as Grady Kelly in the foreground*] a long time ago and has been a big part of the economic growth of DeKalb County. [*Back to close-up of Pierre Howard*] You have the natural history of DeKalb County that's all more or less represented by this one part of DeKalb County.

BECKY KELLY, *first as close-up and then in voiceover of video of the historic Housworth log cabin and its artifacts*: What we see is opportunities all the way around the mountain to preserve different types of environments to all for not only for the preservation of those environments but the proper utility of them. [*Narration continues over map of region, including South River, Panola Mountain, and state- and county-owned land. Scene changes to video of surrounding Panola Mountain and South River areas, along with young people being led on field trips in the area.*] It also provides us an opportunity to connect Arabia to Panola Mountain, which is the state property just to our south, to the South River, which is a vitally important river corridor, which needs protection. We see this as the beginning of a larger natural-resource effort, with the Yellow River, the South River, Arabia, Panola all becoming intertwined and interconnected corridor of rainways and pedestrian and vehicular access so that our citizens and future generations can experience a variety of environmental areas.

TITLE DISPLAY: "A Smart Growth Plan"

RAND WENTWORTH, *identified onscreen as "The Trust for Public Land, Dir. Atlanta Field Office"*: A lot of people are using the term "smart growth," and it means a hundred different things to different people. But in my mind smart growth means that you're designing communities which work for people and for nature in the long run, [*Narration continues over video of mother and children walking through the woods, scenes of farmland, and the Ragsdale House as it was in 1999 and in 1907.*] family-friendly communities. What this section of DeKalb County offers is a piece of country that is still much like it was a hundred years ago. [*Video returns to close-up of Rand Wentworth.*] It's not too late for DeKalb County to decide its fate for this part of our

natural world. *[Narration continues over video of a sign for Stonecrest Mall “opening fall 2001,” followed by scenes of pastures, farmland, and a map showing proposed mall’s proximity to Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve.]* And I’m not talking about anything against development. I believe as a developer that smart growth and smart development actually enhances real estate values in the long run. And they will provide for a heart of the community that will flourish over centuries.

CYNTHIA MCKINNEY: Growth is not a bad thing. It’s uncontrolled growth that is bad. *[Narration continues over video of Georgia state capitol building.]* Governor [Roy] Barnes is doing a wonderful thing by recognizing a responsibility *[Scene returns to close-up of Cynthia McKinney on top of Arabia Mountain.]* for good stewardship of that growth, so that we can balance the growth with our own very basic human needs.

RAND WENTWORTH: Last year the National Association of Homebuilders *[Narration continues over video showing NAHB website and published survey of homebuyers’ preferences.]*—this is the association of all the folks who are building houses all over the country—did a survey of what new homebuyers in America want most. Back in the ’70s it was tennis courts, and in the ’80s it was golf courses. This year for the first time what people said that they wanted most was walking trails. Walking trails. *[Narration continues over video of adults leading a group of Boy Scouts down a woodland path and another group walking along the stone surface on or near Arabia Mountain.]* Something as simple as a walk in nature. This is what the American public is saying in the marketplace that they want to buy. And I think what smart growth is about is responding to what the American people themselves are called to in their hearts, and what the Arabia corridor is about is doing exactly what people want and happens to be the right thing for nature.

CYNTHIA MCKINNEY: Here we have something so pristine, something so beautiful, *[Narration continues over video of planners sitting around table, discussing plans for area.]* and we’ve got public-private partnership individuals who are interested in preserving *[Narration continues over shift in scene to landscape of area surrounding Arabia Mountain.]* and protecting this environment, *[Scene shifts back to Cynthia McKinney.]* because it only takes a little bit to achieve such a great amount.

TITLE DISPLAY: “Partnership and Preservation”

LIANE LEVETAN: I think what's so great about this is the partnership that's existing with the community [*Narration continues over scene shift to group sitting around tables in discussion.*] with the businesses and also with government working together to retain the best of what DeKalb County has, [*Narration continues over scene shift to two men going over a map of the area, with the granite mountaintop in the background.*] and that is Arabia Mountain.

JAMES MACKAY: This can't be done by any one agency in the government or any private corporation or any group of individuals. [*Narration continues over scene shift to group of people standing on the surface of Arabia Mountain.*] It's got to be done with a herculean effort right now, and there's something about a shared experience such as this project would give to millions of people literally that makes it crucially important that we act now and act fast and act effectively.

CHARLIE DAVIDSON: This is a step in the right direction, and I'm—I think we should preserve this property. It's here, it's available, and if we don't do it, our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren, and all those who come after will suffer. [*Scene shifts to video of heavy traffic on Atlanta street. Pierre Howard narrates.*]

PIERRE HOWARD: You know that two million more people are coming into this city within the next ten years. [*Scene shifts to close-up of Pierre Howard.*] And as the demands to satisfy the needs of those people rise, we're going to lose more and more of our open space. [*Narration continues over video of Pierre Howard and another man walking over the surface of Arabia Mountain.*] So if we don't at now to preserve some of what is left of our natural heritage in this county, the opportunity is going to be lost. And that's why I think it's so important for those of us who care about our county to do something now to preserve the natural heritage of the Arabia Mountain area.

MAX CLELAND: Thank God we have protected Stone Mountain. [*Narration continues over blurred black-and-white video of Stone Mountain.*] I can remember in the 1950s when Governor Marvin Griffin purchased Stone



Mountain for the state. [*Scene changes to close-up of Max Cleland.*] Everybody thought, “Well, that’s kind of a Looney Tunes idea. I mean, why purchase this big mountain?” But you didn’t have the sprawl then. He was very far-sighted. And thank God, because now it [urban sprawl] affects Stone Mountain. There’s this marvelous green space that people can repair to in the midst of urban sprawl and all that growth. [*Narration continues over video of rural landscape of fields and trees near Arabia Mountain.*] That is the kind of concept I think is worthy to pursue at Arabia Mountain, that it becomes part of a green space, part of a natural environment for our history and our heritage that we want to preserve so that we can enjoy it, all of us, for future generations. If we don’t we’ll be the less for it.

[*Scene changes to video of Ragsdale House, with Liane Levetan narrating.*] The heritage of this past that we have with Arabia Mountain is really and truly a key to the future. [*Close-up of Liane Levetan*] And what we need to do is to preserve what we have, not only for our present generations but for those that will come after us.

[*Scene changes briefly to Cynthia McKinney and Marcia Glenn leading group of children on surface of Arabia Mountain, then to close-up of Cynthia McKinney.*]

CYNTHIA MCKINNEY: It’s important for us to recognize that basically we are just a little, small speck in a long continuum and that to the extent that we preserve our history, we know who we are. We know who we are as a community, [*Narration continues over scene shift to Cynthia McKinney and Marcia Glenn with children on the surface of Mt. Arabia.*] we know who we are as a people, we know who we are as a nation.

JAMES MACKAY: We can do it. That’s my sign-off. We must do it. We will do it. [*Scene change to video of field and forest with top of Arabia Mountain in the background*]

*Scene change to text superimposed over photograph of Arabia Mountain:*

“This video was made possible

through financial support from:

The Gertrude & William C. Wardlaw Fund

Henry Finkbeiner

Jump\Cut Productions”

*Scene change to text superimposed over a video of Arabia Mountain:*

“And through the generous efforts of these supporters:

DeKalb County Government

DeKalb County Parks & Recreation Department

DeKalb Historical Society

Partners for DeKalb Parks, Inc.”

*Scene change to text superimposed over a video of waterfall at Arabia Mountain:*

“Executive Producer:  
Kelly Jordan

Producer/Director/Editor:  
Phil Walker

Videographer:  
Mark Ramsey

Sound:  
Ritchie McNally”

*Scene change to text superimposed over a video of surface of Arabia Mountain:*

“Soundtrack:  
From ‘Music on the Mountain’  
by  
William Coulter  
&  
Barry Phillips

Gourd Music 1996

Used by permission:  
Neal Hellman, Gourd Music”

*Scene change to text superimposed over a video of two deer walking across the surface of Arabia Mountain:*

“Special Thanks to  
all of the individuals  
& organizations of the  
Davidson-Arabia Mt.  
Heritage Area Alliance  
For their time, energy  
& support.

© Jump\Cut Productions Inc. 1999”

*Scene change to text superimposed over a video over the surface of Arabia Mountain, showing forest and horizon in background:*

“© Jump\Cut Productions Inc. 1999”

Transcribed by CS