

## Wesley Chapel—Lost History

The Wesley Chapel United Methodist's "old" church (1897), once located along the intersection of Wesley Chapel and Snapfinger Roads, was torn down last October in a sad loss for DeKalb County. Wesley Chapel's congregation is believed to be one of the two oldest in the county and actually predates the formation of DeKalb in 1822.

The congregation's first church was located on Flat Shoals Road, about two miles south of the current location, on land owned by Patrick White. During this time, Native Americans still used the land and had disputes with the early settlers. The building was probably a simple brush arbor — a shelter of poles which supported a brush roof. The second building, constructed of split logs, was built around 1828 on Flakes Mill Road.

The third church, a wooden frame structure, was constructed about 100 yards from the recently razed building. It was partially sited on what is

now known as the Wesley Chapel Cemetery. A specific construction date for that structure is unknown. *Vanishing DeKalb* includes a photo of that church on the day it was torn down.

Wesley Chapel's fourth building, or "old" church, was built on land donated by Benjamin Sprayberry. Construction began in 1896 and the church was dedicated in May of 1897. At the time, families traveled to church by buggy and had a difficult time crossing Snapfinger Creek when it was at its deepest in the spring. It was a simple clapboard church that closely resembled the third building in shape and size.

Numerous changes in the county after World War II impacted the structure and congregation. The intersection at Snapfinger and Wesley Chapel Roads grew busier, the roads were widened and paved, and the congregation was

Continued on page 4



This photo shows of one of the stained glass memorial windows in August 2010.

## Seldom Seen Photos Saved!

Significant progress has been made on an exciting archival project in the past few months. The project is to preserve our Guy Hayes negatives and make them more accessible to the public. Thanks to a grant from the Decatur Craft Beer Festival, we purchased an Epson V700 flatbed scanner. Much of the Guy Hayes Collection is medium and large format negatives, which are simply too big for a regular scanner to handle. Erica Duvic, our Joyce Cohrs Archives Intern from Georgia State University, researched scanners. We also posed the question of "which scanner" to the Society of American Archivists listserv, and settled on the Epson due to its versatility.

Erica has scanned all of the negatives that had previously been processed and re-housed, about 1,600 separate images. They were scanned at a high

Continued on page 2

### Inside this issue

- Upcoming Events, page 3
- End of Year Donations, page 4
- New Staff Member, page 4
- Membership Report, page 5

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Continued from page 1

resolution so that enlargements can be made. She also made "access copies" that can be flipped through quickly. We printed contact sheets, so for the first time at the History Center, we can view this amazing array of images from the 1940s through the 1980s. These wonderful images have been largely unknown to us, as they were housed in envelopes and packed into boxes.

Hayes, a graduate of Clarkston High School and resident of Avondale Estates, donated his extensive files of photographic negatives and a small group of prints to the History Center in 1984 and 1985. Hayes' wife, Dottie, a volunteer with DHC, and his friend and attorney, Walter McCurdy, a board member and past president, convinced him to place the photographs in the DHC Archives upon his retirement.

Prior to his military service in the navy during World War II, he worked as a photographer for Atlanta Newspapers, Inc. Upon his return to civilian life he continued that association working primarily for *The Atlanta Journal* for over 50 years. Hayes also worked as a photographer for the *DeKalb News/Sun* from the 1960s to the 1980s.

We are so grateful to **Joyce Cohrs** and her contributions to the archives. Her ongoing support has provided us with many fantastic interns! ✦



Car auction in front of the DeKalb County Courthouse, 1957.



Jimmy Hoffa speaking at the Atlanta Biltmore Hotel.



There are many animals featured, including this dog and his amazing ears!



Felipe Alou, most recently manager for the San Francisco Giants, when he was playing for the Atlanta Braves 1964-1969.

## Upcoming Events

**For all of these upcoming events, please check our website as we add information!**

Our fourth annual Black History Month Celebration. **“A Salute to DeKalb’s Military Heroes.” Thursday, February 24, from 11:30 a.m. — 1:00 p.m.** at the Old Courthouse on the Square. This ticketed event includes lunch and entertainment by the James C. Ward Classical Arts Chorale. Tickets are \$30 for members or \$35 for non-members. Sponsorships are also available.

**Tour “The Cofer Collection!” On February 26, from 10:00 a.m. to noon.** A curator will guide you through this private car collection featuring automobiles from 1914–1999. This tour is free but is only open to *current* members of the DeKalb History Center. *Space is limited and reservations are required.* Contact Leslie Borger at [dhs@dekalbhistory.org](mailto:dhs@dekalbhistory.org) or 404-373-1088, extension 20 for more information or to RSVP.

**Lunch & Learn:** Presidential Visits to Georgia, by Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., **on Tuesday, March 15 at Noon.** Ken’s presentation starts with a visit from George Washington in 1791 and continues into the 20th Century. For instance, President and Mrs. Coolidge spent a week on Sapelo Island in the late 1920s. Free—bring your lunch!

**Tour the Methodist Children’s Home**—Free for members and \$5 for non-members. Saturday, March 12, 11:00 a.m. Reservations are limited. Contact Leslie Borger at [dhs@dekalbhistory.org](mailto:dhs@dekalbhistory.org) or 404-373-1088, extension 20.

**Old House Fair on March 19th** at the Holiday Inn in Decatur. Come visit our booth and hear speakers on various “Old House” topics—the emphasis is on the Ranch House this year, but there is great information included for *all* homeowners!

Join us for our **Annual Meeting and Silent Auction on Friday, March 25, from 6:00–8:30 p.m.** at the Old Courthouse on the Square. Enjoy an evening of wine, beer, hors d’oeuvres and music while bidding on fantastic items donated by generous local businesses.

**Talking Walls Workshop, June 6–10, for DeKalb Educators.** This workshop will give educators a greater understanding of DeKalb County’s historic resources and how they can be used to supplement and enrich the classroom curriculum. Additional information will be included in our next newsletter. ✦



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 for the Archives:  
**Joyce Cohrs**  
**Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr.**  
 We received a donation in Honor of  
 Jim and Mary K. Jarboe from  
 Douglas Jarboe

## Wesley Chapel (Cont.)

Continued from page 1

outgrowing their building. In 1950-51, the building was reoriented to face the intersection and was elevated to accommodate a basement which included classrooms. The church was now in front of the cemetery instead of beside it.

In short order, even this enlarged building was outgrown. The congregation bought 10 additional acres on Wesley Chapel Road for a fifth building which was constructed in 1963 and an educational building finished in 1968. The "old" church went on to house many different small congregations as they began until they found permanent homes. It functioned this way for many decades while the landscape around it became full of commercial enterprises.

The staff at the History Center got word that the congregation was considering demolition of this historic structure. We met with their current pastor and two other

church representatives in August of last year. The congregation no longer used the "old" church and did not value its history. DHC asked for time to work with them to find a use or buyer for the structure. We were told that we could present options, but not how long we had to come up with a solution.

Our Executive Director spoke with the district superintendant of the North Georgia Office of the United Methodist Church and was told that if the congregation wanted to demolish the building, the superintendant would support them. The structure was certainly still usable and could have been restored. It only took one day in

October for the bulldozer to bring down most of the building. We did not know demolition was underway until the bulldozer had nearly finished its task. We hope that a better understanding of historic resources will help prevent these losses in the future. ✦



Wesley Chapel as it appeared in 1964—from an article in the DeKalb New Era.

## Meet our newest Staff Member

Stacey Roudebush recently relocated to Atlanta from San Francisco. Born and raised in Birmingham, she graduated from the University of Alabama with a Bachelors of Fine Art in 1996. Stacey was the Executive Assistant at The Kentucky Museum Association in Northport, Alabama, where she managed studios, galleries and a gift shop and assisted in the planning of the Kentucky Festival of the Arts.

In 1999, Stacey moved to San Francisco to pursue a graduate degree in Arts Administration, which she completed in 2001 from Golden Gate University. She joined the staff of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) where she assisted with membership recruitment and programming. She later worked in the Education Department with students,

teachers and museum docents. She organized and trained SFMOMA docents on touring the public through the Museum's exhibitions.

Stacey left SFMOMA in 2006 to develop a gift-basket business that featured only sustainable and eco-friendly products from Northern California companies. In the fall of 2009, Stacey and her husband decided to leave big city life and come home to the South to settle in Atlanta.

Stacey's interests include contemporary art, live music and SEC sports. A collector of Southeastern Folk Art, she enjoys Southern folk lore and history. In her spare time, you may find her paper crafting or embroidering. She currently lives in Kirkwood with her husband, Joel and their mutt, Dixie. ✦

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