

“Daddy, why are all your tractors brown?”

By Bob Kelley

Ever seen a hog oiler or held a brass claw hammer? Would you recognize a hit-and-miss flywheel engine if you saw one? And just how much corn does a corn shucker shuck?

For rural Depression-era folks or even baby boomers, these are not particularly hard questions. But for those born into later generations, these terms are as foreign as an 8-track tape player and 5¢ candy bar.

For the past quarter century, Doraville, Georgia, resident John Maloney has made it his hobby to preserve and protect antique farm equipment and agricultural tools...obsolete remnants of the fading rural American fabric. Doraville seems an appropriate locale for such a collection. It was founded



Doraville's John Maloney has tirelessly assembled a collection of antique farm tools and equipment that proves everything old can be new again.

Photos by Bob Kelley

nearly 200 years ago as a small agricultural community that, over the years, blossomed into a bustling suburban city 11 miles north of downtown Atlanta.

“The Maloneys came to the Doraville area decades ago,” says Maloney. “My grandfather, J.H. ‘Bud’ Maloney, had a dairy farm in rural Doraville on property where they later built the old General Motors plant and he also ran an Amoco station in long-demolished ‘downtown’ Doraville. My daddy helped on the dairy, but after he returned from World War II he eventually went to work for the local postal service and didn’t do as much farming as my granddaddy. So I missed out on the full-blown farming experience but would help ‘farm’ our annual garden.”

A retired General Electric transformer technician, Maloney started his early-American rural farm and

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History is Everywhere

Where can you learn history by daydreaming and looking out the window? Decatur High School. Okay, that might be a stretch, but if Decatur High School students look out the window and across the front lawn they see the intersection of South McDonough Street and College Avenue. This modern intersection represents where two important Indian trails formed an ancient crossroads. The first trail, the Shallow Ford Trail, ran north and south, along what is now Clairmont Ave and McDonough Street. The other trail ran east and west from Stone

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Upcoming Events

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Be sure to come to our next two Lunch and Learns! These lectures are usually the third Tuesday of every other month. They begin at noon and are over at 1:00 p.m. Please bring a lunch and join us in the Old Superior Courtroom.

Genealogy: It's Time to Get Started!

Tuesday, September 17, Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Have you always wanted to research your family tree, but just don't know where to start? Come to the Lunch and Learn at the DeKalb History Center for some great tips and information from **Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr.** Technology has changed but the information you are gathering about your family has not. Whether you are looking at microfilm or Ancestry.com, Thomas has pointers to make the process easier! Genealogy research is a vast topic, but this focused talk will give you basic information you can actually use.

Thomas is the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Genealogy Columnist (since 1977), but his credentials don't stop there! A native of Columbus, Georgia, Thomas graduated from Emory University with a B.A. in history and served in the United States Air Force for over three years. He was the historian at the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for 33 years. In 2011, Thomas became co-chair of the newly-formed Coalition to Preserve the Georgia Archives, which has worked tirelessly to keep the Georgia Archives operating and open to the public. Thomas has had a passion for genealogy since childhood. His weekly AJC column "Genealogy" is one of the longest running columns of its kind in the country. Today, Thomas lectures frequently throughout the state on various historical and genealogical topics. He continues to research the genealogy of his own family and some of Georgia's prominent historical figures. This past May, he received the John Macpherson Berrien Lifetime Achievement Award from the Georgia Historical Society.

November 22, 1963: The Assassination of a President

Tuesday, November 19, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

(Please note: the earlier time will allow you to view Richardson's collection. The lecture will start at noon.)

Join us as we reflect on a grim anniversary. Historian **Jennifer Richardson** will guide you through the events of November 22 - 25 from the assassination to the funeral of President John F. Kennedy. One fact is undisputed: on November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was killed. What else do you know about that day? Along the way, you will learn about the Warren Commission, the magic bullet theory, the hundreds of books written on the subject in the last 50 years, Oliver Stone's movie, and the scores of reasonable and ludicrous conspiracy theories. Finally, what have we learned about the impact on our society by the assassination from a perspective of 50 years? Bring your memories and bring your questions. Leave with a fuller understanding of one of the most poignant events in the twentieth century. The lecture will take place at noon. Come an hour earlier (11:00 a.m.) to view Richardson's extensive collection of assassination memorabilia.

Jennifer Richardson is a professional musician, author, and retired psychotherapist who has lived in the Druid Hills/Decatur area for nearly 59 years. She attended Georgia State where she received a degree in music education, and masters' degrees in music history and performance. She has taught music and played flute, harp, keyboard and has sung alto in numerous Atlanta groups. She currently performs with The Wind and Wood Chamber Players. She later attended the University of Georgia, receiving an MSW; and later an ACSW and LCSW and the designation of Certified Cognitive Behavior Therapist. Richardson worked as a psychotherapist in private practice for many years, and along the way, she authored two non-fiction books. In addition to music and therapy, her passions are historic preservation and history. She currently writes history articles for several publications in the Atlanta area. In past, she has served on the board of the DeKalb History Center, and currently serves on the Druid Hills Landmark District Preservation Committee. ✦

History Adventure

We will offer a new curriculum-based living history program this fall for elementary and high school students. *History Adventure* will be located in the historic complex on West Trinity and will take place on October 24 & 25. This new event developed by Jenny Goldmund, Programs and Preservation Coordinator, will help create the context through which students come to truly understand their past.

The two-day event is tailored to the needs of various grade-levels. The first day, October 24, is aligned with Georgia History curriculum standards for second and eighth grades. Students talk with James Oglethorpe, who gives a vivid account of his adventures founding the Georgia colony; Mary Musgrove, an early entrepreneur and Oglethorpe's translator; Sequoyah, creator of the Cherokee syllabary; and Harriett Tubman, who inspires students with stories about the Underground Railroad. Students also visit a DeKalb pioneer cabin to see a nineteenth century cooking demonstration, and they visit two historic homes to learn about early settlers and nineteenth-century lifestyles.



James Oglethorpe

Fourth graders and high school students are invited to visit the second day of the *History Adventure*, October 25, to experience early American History. They will be greeted by a pre-contact Woodland Indian in her camp, meet a Revolutionary War soldier from General Washington's army, and see an archaeology and Native American tool demonstration. Harriett Tubman will share her life story again on the second day, and students will visit the pioneer cabin and an historic settler home.

Sponsorship opportunities are available! If you or your business would like to help sponsor this program, please contact Jenny at goldmund@dekalbhistory.org or at 404-373-1088, extension 20. ✦



Harriett Tubman

Exhibits Update

Don't miss this temporary exhibit:

Artrospective: 25 Years of the Decatur Arts Festival

The Decatur Arts Alliance marks the milestone 25th anniversary of the Decatur Arts Festival with Artrospective. This exhibit highlights the history of the event which grew from humble local beginnings to become a wildly popular regional festival. The collection includes festival posters and logos, T-shirts, press clippings, and loads of festival memorabilia. A collection of photos taken on the square in the early 1990s will provide newcomers and visitors a unique perspective on the evolution of the city. The exhibit was curated by Decatur Active Living Assistant Director Cheryl Burnette, who served as the Executive Director of the Arts Alliance and managed the Arts Festival from 1999 to 2008.

Plus, we are working hard to get **The Mid-Century Ranch House: Hip and Historic!** open by Labor Day weekend. Stop in to see why we are so excited. You'll Have It Made in the Shade!

House For Sale: 101 East Court Square, Decatur. It's 1960. Meet your modern dream ranch house! Perfect for Barbie, Ken and babies. This red brick number is a cherry; complete with carport, pink powder room, and knotty pine paneling complemented by nifty chartreuse walls. The front yard is darling, the porch has fab ironwork and your back yard bash will have room to spread. This house is so aced that it will fly off the market. Open House is Labor Day weekend and beyond...enter through the historic DeKalb County Courthouse. ✦

“Why are all your

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equipment treasure trove in the mid-1980s when he developed an interest in fly wheel engines. These are single cylinder engines often used by farmers as stationary power sources. If electricity was needed away from available outlets, the fly wheel engines, run off of flat belts, could power farm equipment like buzz saws and grain elevators. “As a collector, I would take the old engines to farm shows to display, but they eventually became too cumbersome to haul around,” Maloney recalls. “I then turned my attention to restoring old John Deere tractors and Model A cars.”

Maloney once placed an ad seeking a particular John Deere model that generated a response from a farmer in Buford, Georgia. “I went to his farm and out in the field was a rusted skeleton of a tractor dating to the 1930s that was covered with vines and weeds. It had to be restored from scratch,” he says. “I often brought old rusted tractors like these home to restore and I remember my daughter, Lisa, once asking: ‘Daddy, why are all the tractors you bring home brown?’ By the time Maloney was finished with each “brown” tractor he brought home, it had been restored to its original glory, gleaming in the traditional Deere colors of green and yellow.

As his interest in collecting grew, Maloney scoured flea markets and farm shows looking for those “just right” components to place into his collection. Today, a three-room utility building in his backyard houses nearly 2,000 artifacts ranging from Coca-Cola trays to antique farm and hand tools to butter churns and small tabletop grist mills. Most of the items are meticulously tagged with the date they were acquired and where each piece

came from. “When I go shopping for items to add to the collection, I have to constantly keep in mind the amount of storage space I have available. That’s why most of the items are relatively small, yet unique,” notes Maloney.

For example, a row of claw hammers hanging on a shelf look identical and may not appear at first glance to offer anything special. But closer examination reveals subtle differences in design and material. One of his more unusual pieces is a brass hammer. This is an oddity because brass is such a soft metal it wouldn’t seem feasible for heavy construction work. Maloney quickly offers an explanation. “They used brass hammers and pick axes in the natural gas fields because brass striking rock would not produce a spark that could create a natural gas inferno,” he explains.

One of his favorite items in the extensive collection is an old hog oiler dating from the days of the Great Depression. These are heavy cast iron reservoirs that were filled with burned motor oil that in turn lubricated big external wheels as they were turned. The oilers were then placed in a hog lot and the pigs would rub against the wheels, rotating them and transferring the oil onto their skin. Natural instinct taught the animals to slather oil over their bodies to keep lice and bugs at bay.

Another favorite piece Maloney delights in showing visitors is an 1893 calendar found in an old home in Unadilla, Georgia. On the back of the calendar is a list of fire alarm box locations in turn-of-the-century Atlanta. They were located at intersections such as Peachtree and Cain Streets, at the Atlanta Street Car Stables and the Fulton Cotton Spinning Company, a nostalgic link to a long-ago Atlanta.



John Maloney demonstrates corn shelling



... hay baling



... and apple peeling.

tractors brown?" (cont.)

By Bob Kelley

Many of the collection pieces were donated to Maloney by friends and neighbors who often noted they were giving him the artifacts because they were confident he would take good care of them. Several pieces were donated by pioneer Doraville families with locally recognizable names like Creel and Galloway.

Every two years, Maloney puts his collection on display for visitors, providing a popular "gift" to the community. Visitors gleefully sit atop chugging, restored John Deere tractors (circa 1930) or watch mesmerized as a baler noisily belches and pushes forth perfectly formed bales of hay. He delights in watching youngsters sheer the skin off apples using a vintage apple peeler or helps them make rope from pieces of twine. Over the three-day open house, guests file through the utility building showrooms whose walls are lined with historic tools and nostalgic artifacts. Throughout each day, they are treated to multiple demonstrations ranging from how to tap a pine tree for tar to purring fly wheel engines, whirling buzz saws and even sitting behind the wheel of either of Maloney's two shiny, restored Model A Fords...all for free.

"I started doing the open houses 10 years ago with kind of a Field of Dreams mentality," laughs Maloney. "You know...if you build it, they will come to see it. I believed I had historic, nostalgic pieces that others might find interesting. I initially started by doing presentations for Doraville senior citizen groups because they liked seeing items that had been so commonplace when they were young, but hard to find today. Then youth service groups like the Boy Scouts expressed an interest in the old tools and machinery, and the open houses gradually evolved into what they are today."

Maloney schedules the open houses every two years to keep interest in the collection alive. "I try to feature new demonstrations with each open house to keep it fresh," he notes. "Last year we had the farm equipment fired up, along with demonstrations on hay baling, tapping pine trees, shelling corn, grinding corn into meal, apple peeling, rope making and buzz saws cutting wood. In 2014, I would like to add butter-making demonstrations and show how to separate cream from cow's milk plus some other surprises."

The number of visitors has steadily grown with each open house and this year a record 200+ people attended the event. In addition to the numerous activities, guests are treated, free of charge, to ice cold lemonade, cookies, homemade pound cake and sizzling hot dogs to round out their visit. All of the food is homemade and cheerfully served by Maloney's wife, Betty. Growing up in Ludowici, Georgia, she, too, has contributed an assortment of family heirlooms that include dishes, utensils and antique kitchen equipment to her husband's prized collection. The Maloney's children, Lisa and Adam, often

contribute items and they recently stumbled upon a vintage washing machine wringer, a butter churn and antique can opener that they purchased for their father. Both children and their families also lend a hand to help produce the open houses.

In the time between open houses, Maloney is often called upon to bring his restored tractors or cars to small-town parades such as Dacula's annual Memorial Day parade and other nearby towns' special events like Bostwick, Georgia's Cotton Gin Festival.

"I guess the most amazing thing to me about my collection is discovering the brilliance people had a hundred years ago to create such useful and sturdy items," says Maloney. "Each piece, whether collectible or historically significant or not, is different in its own way. The old-world craftsmanship is amazing, and people back then knew how to make the most with what they had on hand. They didn't have the technology like we have today to generate these pieces. They used good old know-how and trial and error." A humble, soft-spoken Southern good ole boy, Maloney's modesty surfaces when discussing his collection and the open houses. "I like to show people my collection, not show off my collection," he emphatically explains.

As for the ultimate future of the tool and equipment ensemble, Maloney says his collecting days are far from over. However, with a twinkle in his eye, he adds "I used to say when I die, my family is going to have an early morning funeral and a late afternoon auction!"

When that time comes, hopefully far into the future, John Maloney's treasured collection will, in all probability, wind up in an agricultural museum and not on the auction block. ✦



One of John's restored tractors—gleaming green and yellow, not brown.

Early DeKalb

Mountain to Sandtown on the Chattahoochee River.

The Stone Mountain-Sandtown Trail also has geological significance as it runs on top of a sub-continental divide, forming a watershed. Rain falling on the north side of the ridge makes its way into the Chattahoochee River and the Gulf of Mexico while rain falling south of the ridge ends up in the South River and then the Atlantic ocean.

We do not know exactly how long ago the trails were created, but there are several archaeological sites along the rivers and creeks in DeKalb County dating back to the Archaic period, which began 10,000 years ago. People during this period were still semi-nomadic so movement occurred as ancient hunter-gatherers followed their prey.

Some of the Archaic-period sites in DeKalb are at Soapstone Ridge, which is near the South River. Soapstone Ridge was a major industrial center over 5,000 years ago. Soapstone was a precious commodity for making bowls, carvings, pipes and small tools. It also became a powerful trade commodity and items made from Soapstone Ridge material have been found as far away as the Mississippi River basin and coastal Georgia.

During the Woodland period, which began 3,000 years ago, people began forming permanent settlements and growing their own food. They built huts made from river cane and mud. Travelers at this time might have been stooped over with a burden of trade goods carried in a large river cane basket to exchange with the next village. The natives here spoke a Muscogean language and were the forebears of the people we now refer to as Creek Indians, although that name did not come about until the 17th century.

Once they had become proficient at meeting their basic needs, the native people here began developing a complex belief system based on a multi-tiered world where the chief, thought to be a direct descendent of the sun, could never touch the ground. This period is called Mississippian and it is when mounds were



This photo, taken on Soapstone Ridge, shows how bowls were carved out of this soft rock. This one was abandoned by its maker.

Photo courtesy of Alan Cressler.



A view of the courthouse from the early 1900s. Decatur High School is now located on the left side of the street from this view.

From the Joe Lee Postcard Collection.

History (cont.)

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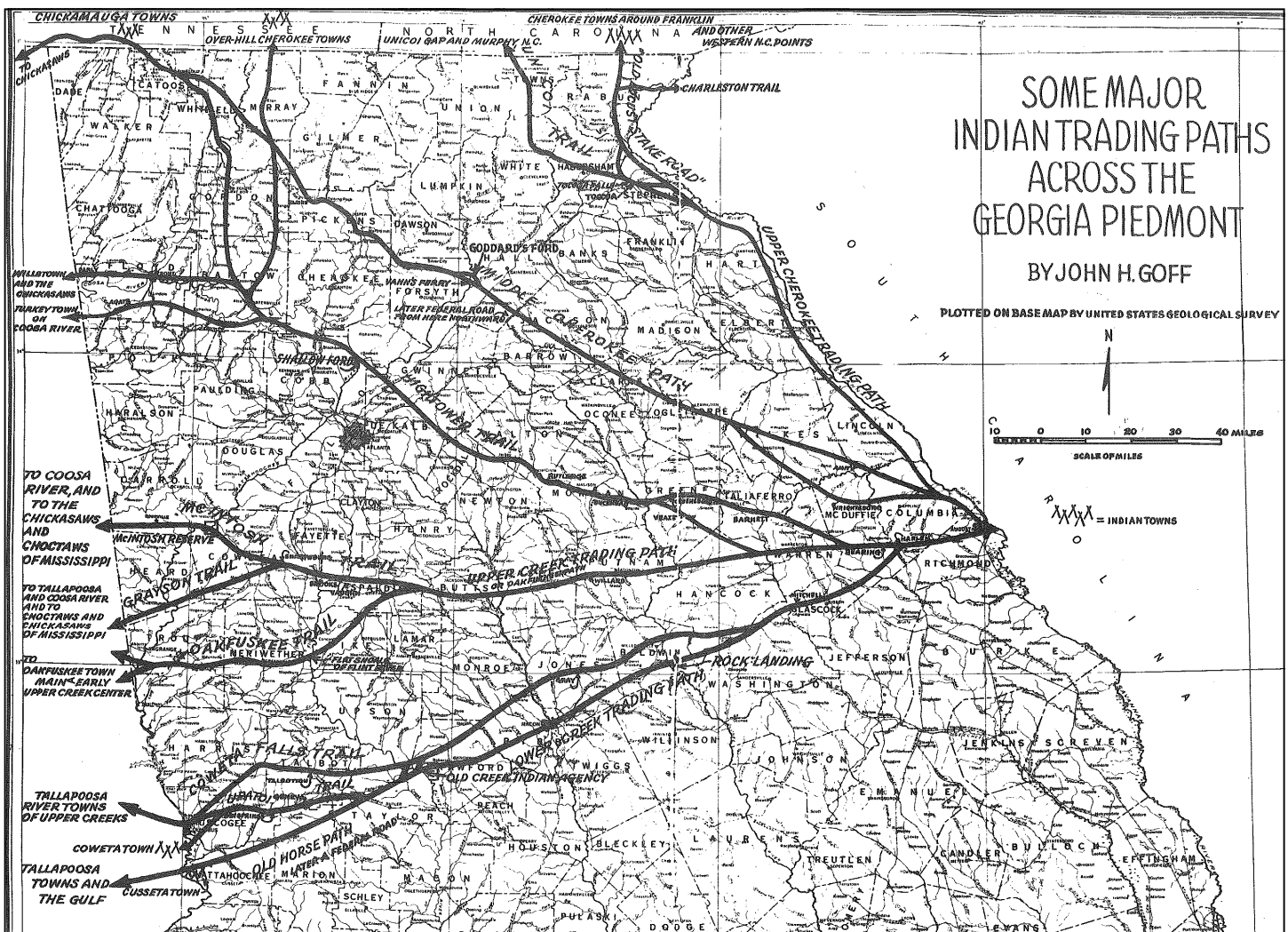
constructed, although there are no known mounds in DeKalb. Large sprawling villages were part of larger chiefdoms, which could extend for 200 miles or more.

During the Mississippian period Indians had extensive trade networks and traveled long distances, so these trails were heavily used. When Spanish explorers and European traders arrived they also used the well-worn paths. Later on, major roads and railroads in the county followed Indian trails. The railroad tracks that run next to College Ave. follow the exact route of the Stone Mountain-Sandtown Trail.

European contact in the mid-16th century brought epidemics of Smallpox, Measles, Bubonic Plague, and Yellow Fever, diseases

to which natives had no immunity. Some archaeologists estimate that up to 90% of the native population perished over the next two centuries. Natives became refugees in their own lands as they left devastated villages and sought other survivors. It was during this great upheaval and transition of the seventeenth century that the Cherokees moved into North Georgia and the remnants of the Muscogean-speaking tribes coalesced into the Creek Confederacy.

The history of the native people in DeKalb is rich and complex, and there are other stories under those tracks at College and McDonough. The students at Decatur High just don't know how good they've got it. ✦



John H. Goff, of Georgia Tech and Emory and author of *Placenames of Georgia*, illustrated these Georgia Indian trails overlaid on a U.S. Geological Survey map.

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