

From The Archives

Thomas Holley Chivers 1809 -1858

Thomas Holley Chivers, MD, might sound like a late 20th-century popular television character, but he's an example of the old adage that life is stranger than fiction. Mark Twain may have been referring to Chivers and his friend Edgar Allen Poe with his quip "Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't."

Franklin M. Garrett said in *Atlanta and*

Environs: A Chronicle of Its People and Events, "In October, 1856, there removed, from Washington, Georgia, to Decatur, Georgia, a citizen who has been characterized as the 'Lost Poet of Georgia,' the 'wild Mazeppa of letters,' and the 'friend of Poe.' Thomas Holley Chivers, poet, physician, draftsman and portrait painter, was born at Digby Manor, the home of his father near Washington, Wilkes County."

Garrett wrote that Chivers commenced his medical education at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, after "an unfortunate early marriage."



Chivers grave marker before it was vandalized. This photo was taken around 1940 and when his grave was marked with a draped urn.

Chivers developed a keen interest at an early age for poetry and chose that profession over the medical field early in his adult life. His first published work, *The Path of Sorrow* (1832), is a collection of poetry inspired by his difficult first marriage to cousin Elizabeth Chivers in 1827. The union lasted less than a year before she disappeared, apparently pregnant with their daughter. His second marriage to Harriett Hunt of

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Dance Hall Decatur

Ring in the New Year and dance the night away with the DeKalb History Center! Your reservation includes a professional DJ playing hits from the 1970s to the present, appetizers, sodas, and festive party favors. Guests purchase drink tickets for beer, wine or cocktails. Festive dress is encouraged. Represent your favorite musical style or decade if you like, or just show up prepared to dance!

Advance reservations: \$25 for members, \$35 for non-members and \$15 for under 21 only. After December 29, the prices are \$30 for members, \$40 for non-members and \$15 for under 21 only. Dance Hall Decatur is at the Historic DeKalb Courthouse on the second floor.

Special thanks to Jackson Spalding and Sawicki's. ✦

See the poster on page 3

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Upcoming Events

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Have Historic House Will Travel: The Swanton House Is on the Move

January 19, noon – 1:00 p.m.

Historic DeKalb Courthouse, 101 E. Court Sq., Decatur, GA 30030

Free - Bring your lunch!

The **January Lunch & Learn** presented by our archivist **Fred Mobley** will chronicle the various plans for historic restoration that were developed and considered for the Swanton House in the early 1960s until the dedication ceremonies on December 10th, 1972. Come learn the fascinating history of this house including the various concepts that were up for consideration, and the final results reflecting not only on the practices of historic preservation of that period but the forces at play in the cultural landscape that landed the Historic Swanton House where it sits today.

The Benjamin Swanton House is one of the oldest structures still standing in Decatur - it has a log cabin as its core estimated to have been built about 1825. The house was enlarged and updated throughout its long history, each change reflecting the popular trends of the times.

Utilizing his Master in Heritage Preservation and educational experience gained at the Jefferson Monticello Historic Landscape Institute, and the Georgia Historic Landscape Initiative Fellowship at the Cherokee Garden Library of the Atlanta History Center, Mobley will use resource materials from the DHC Archives to show the house's changing history. Mobley received his Master in Heritage Preservation-Public History Track from Georgia State University in August 2010.

History Symposium

Roots of Friendship:

African Americans and Jews in Atlanta, 1900–1950

Saturday, March 5, 2015, 10:00 am - 1:30 pm

Historic DeKalb Courthouse, 101 E. Court Sq., Decatur, GA 30030

Check our website soon for program changes,
sponsorship opportunities, reservations and more information.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 10:00 am | Symposium Moderator - Dr. Charissa Threat , Spelman College |
| 10:15–11:00 | Ms. Melissa Fay Greene , author |
| 11:10–11:40 | Ms. Sandy Berman , author and archivist |
| 11:40–12:10 | Ms. Danielle Wiggins , Ph.D. candidate, Emory University |
| 12:10 - 1:30 pm | Lunch (included with reservation) and a panel discussion with Dr. Jelani Favors from Clayton State University as the moderator. |

Panelists: **Mr. David Goldwasser**, and **Mr. Hershel Greenblat** (brief presentations on memories of early African-American and Jewish communities) Other panelists: **Melissa Fay Greene, Sandy Berman, Danielle Wiggins.** ✦

DANCE HALL DECATUR

A BENEFIT FOR
THE DEKALB HISTORY CENTER

NEW
YEAR'S
EVE



DECEMBER 31, 8:30 P.M. - 12:30 A.M.

Be there or be ☐

Reservations: DeKalb History Center in Historic DeKalb Courthouse, 101 E. Court Square, downtown Decatur.
Or at dekalbhistory.org, or at the event.

Advance reservations \$35/\$25 - discount for DHC members. The night includes a professional DJ playing dance music from the 1970s to now, festive party favors, and appetizers. Drink tickets available at the event.

Looking Back and Forward: Fall 2015



At this year's History Adventure, a living history program with nine stations, we hosted almost 2,000 students over three days in October. This program serves three grade levels and is held at the DeKalb History Center's historic complex, which consists of the Benjamin Swanton House and two pioneer log cabins. The Mary Gay House, which is owned by the Junior League of DeKalb and is located next door to the Benjamin Swanton House, was also part of the program for the third year in a row. Special thanks to the **Junior League of DeKalb** for their generous support of this program by supplying volunteers and the use of the Mary Gay House.

Over 60% of the students who attended the History Adventure were from Title I schools and our sponsors helped defray the cost for those students. Special thanks to our sponsors for 2015: **Cousins Foundation, Epps Aviation, Georgia Transmission, and Georgia United Credit Union.** If you would like to join these generous sponsors next year, please contact Jenny Goldemund at goldemund@dekalbhistory.org.

Other special school programs in the fall of 2015 included the *Civil War Experience* in September, *Second-Grade History Day* in October, and *Third-Grade History Days* in November. The *Civil War Experience* is designed for 5th and 8th grade students and it includes the DHC's original play about the Civil War in DeKalb County and professional presenters portraying Harriett Tubman and Abraham Lincoln. Students hear multiple perspectives on some of the war's key issues, giving them insights to build on as they study the war. The DHC presents this program again in



and Spring 2016 School Programs

November 2016 for school groups.

Second-Grade History Day taught students about the early days of the Georgia Colony and included actors portraying James Oglethorpe, Mary Musgrove (Oglethorpe's translator), and Chief Tomochichi. Second Graders also met Sequoyah, the inventor of the Cherokee syllabary. This program was held at the Historic Complex and the Mary Gay House. ***Second-Grade History Day, Part 2, is at the Historic Courthouse in March 2016 and will include presentations by actors portraying MLK, Jackie Robinson and Jimmy Carter.***

Third-Grade History Day was held at the Historic Courthouse in November 2015 and taught students about the lives of Paul Revere, Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony. ***Third Grade History Day, Part 2, is in March 2016 and students will meet Eleanor Roosevelt, Thurgood Marshall, LBJ and Cesar Chavez.***

This spring students may also attend the DHC's *Civil Rights Day* on March 2, 2016, where they will see a play about the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This performance is mainly a dialogue between MLK and Rosa Parks as they struggled with key issues in the movement that would shape our nation's future.

In 2015 the DeKalb History Center served over 3,700 students through special school programs and regular school tours and we are on track to reach even more DeKalb County students in 2016. Contact Jenny Goldemund at 404-373-1088, extension 20 for more information. ✦



Rainbow Terrace

In our article on the *Houston Mill House* (*Times of DeKalb* - Summer 2015), we said that Henry Heinz was “a legendary Atlanta architect.” In fact, he was a prominent businessman who in the 1920s was the vice-president of the Citizens and Southern Bank. Heinz was Lucy Candler’s second husband; she was the daughter of Asa G. Candler. We regret the error but will take the opportunity to provide information on their home with historic photos from our archives.

Around 1920 Henry and Lucy built a Mediterranean Revival Style house which they called Rainbow Terrace (1610 Ponce de Leon Avenue). It was designed by architect G. Lloyd Preacher and Company and built by H. J. Carr and was originally pink stucco with a variegated red clay tile roof. Rainbow Terrace featured nearly every detail found in the

finest Mediterranean Style homes: wrought iron, coffered and beamed ceilings, tiled floors, and arched doors, windows and hallways.

17 main rooms enclosed a courtyard in the rear. The main entertaining space was a two-story high “great hall.” All of the public spaces were ornate, with elaborate ceilings and crown moldings, recessed panels in the walls, decorative friezes and built in ornamental shelves. It even had a three-car garage and separate playhouse built in the same style.

In 1943, Henry was shot and killed in his home during an attempted robbery. The events around his murder were chaotic and complex. About a year and a half after the murder, Atlanta police arrested Horace Blalock on suspicion of robbery. During questioning, Blalock made a statement that pointed to his role in the Heinz murder. His fingerprints matched one at that crime scene and when pressed he confessed to the crime. He was sentenced to life in prison, but rumors and speculation still circulate around the murder. Some locals believe the house is haunted.

Lucy quickly moved out and over the years, the house fell into disrepair. In 1975 and 1979, Druid Hills Parks and Parkways, and then the Historic District neighborhood of Druid Hills were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This helped the community and developers focus on saving some of Druid Hill’s amazing mansions while others were torn down. In 1982, the property was developed with 41 townhomes – Rainbow Terrace was retained and converted into six residences. ✦



Rainbow Terrace had a porte cochere and extensive landscaping.



The enclosed courtyard featured a tiled floor and fountain.



The “great hall” was an impressive space for lavish parties.

Archives (cont.)

Continued from page 1

Massachusetts in 1837 resulted in four children.

Chivers and Edgar Allen Poe developed a friendship in 1840, receiving inspiration and support from each other as their friendship grew. It was a tumultuous friendship that rocked back and forth until Poe's death in 1849 at the age of 40. Though it appears that Chivers felt, after Poe's death, that he had plagiarized Chivers' material in "The Raven" and "Ulalume," he continued to support, defend and admire Poe's work. Their styles were similar and Chivers had received praise and recognition in his lifetime, but that soon vanished after his death at age 49 in 1858. Of course, Poe's stature continues to grow to this day.

So what's stranger than truth about Thomas Holley Chivers? Franklin Garrett presents one answer from Chivers' will, which was written the day before he died. "Item #1. It is my desire and I do request that my body be buried on this place whereon I now live, that my grave be made in some quiet

spot where my children can daily visit it. I also desire that my wife Harriett shall visit my last resting place and I wish her to carry my children there."

Mrs. Chivers lived another 30 years, but it appears that she sold the house on East College Avenue after his death and the new owners did not care to have a gravesite in their front yard. He was re-interred at the Decatur Cemetery. The DeKalb History Century has a biographical subject file on Thomas Holley Chivers and copies of Franklin Garrett's *Atlanta and Environs* for patrons to research in the reading room while learning more of the history, folklore and gossip about the "Lost Poet of Georgia."

The DHC Reading Room is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 10:00 – 4:00 by appointment. Email the archivist at mobley@dekalbhistory.org or call 404.373.1088 ext. 23 to make an appointment. Come research more of DeKalb's stranger than truth history! ✦

Our next Newsletter will include our annual list of members. Membership donations are extremely important to our mission and we appreciate your support! If you have questions about your membership, please email Melissa at forgey@dekalbhistory.org.

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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Please mail this form with your contribution to: DeKalb History Center, 101 East Court Square, Decatur GA 30030

DeKalb History Center

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101 East Court Square
Decatur GA 30030

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