

DeKalb History Center

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CENTER

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Times of DeKalb

Summer
2026

WSB Transmitter at East Lake

By Marissa Howard, Programs & Membership Coordinator

The 1930s were the golden age for radio. In 1930, roughly 12 million American households owned a radio; by the end of the decade it was more than 28 million.

WSB Radio was the first radio station to broadcast in Atlanta when it launched in 1922. Before television, radio brought news, entertainment, and culture to Atlantans. At the time of launch, the AM radio signal emitted 100 watts from the roof of the downtown Atlanta Journal building, which reached most of the city proper. In 1925, the station expanded into a new studio and built a new transmission facility atop the Biltmore Hotel, increasing wattage to 1,000.

Then, in 1930, WSB took a huge leap forward. The station constructed a major new transmission facility at the northeast corner of Glenwood and Candler Roads.

The new East Lake Station was an impressive symbol of modern technology. Soaring into the air were two dual 205 foot transmission towers supporting a powerful new antenna system that boosted WSB's signal to 5,000 watts. This new signal could reliably transmit across the Southeast. Between the two towers stood a stucco station transmission building, designed by the well known firm of Morgan, Dillon, and Lewis.

Inside, was state-of-the art radio equipment along with a modern, furnished apartment where station engineer Albert Shropshire lived with his wife, Marion. The opening of the station was celebrated over the airwaves as a grand affair.

Today, tall skyscrapers and towers barely attract notice, but in 1930 these structures would have dominated the horizon for miles around. The towers became a local landmark and were frequently used as a point of



WSB control room at Biltmore Hotel, circa 1930. WSB Radio Records, Popular Music and Culture Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library.

reference for driving directions. The towers were painted white, black and yellow in accordance with air safety regulations for airplanes going to and from Candler Field.

No expense was spared, even the grounds were landscaped by William B. Deckner, a noted landscaper and horticulturist. This building would have been a showpiece of technology, innovation, and design and yet it was on the edge of urban development. Additionally, the development was done in unincorporated rural DeKalb County and not in the City of Atlanta. Which makes me wonder, why this spot?

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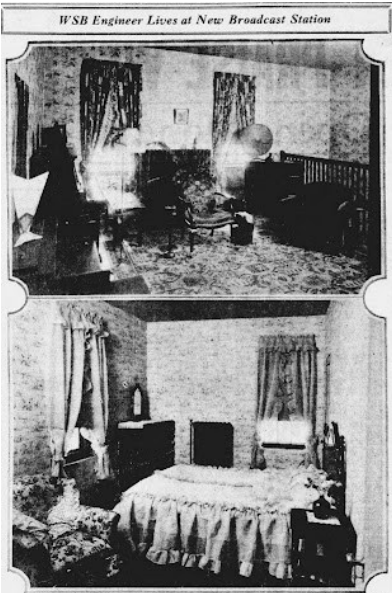
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WSB Transmitter at East Lake continued

The Atlanta Journal bought this ten-acre property from Hooper Alexander, a well known Atlanta attorney and legislator. It had been the location of his country home and the sale took place in August of 1929 for \$10,000.

The East Lake transmitter’s glory days were short lived. Just three years later, in 1933, WSB opened a 50,000-watt transmitter station on a 23-acre tract on Lavista Road. I can’t pinpoint a year when the lights turned off at East Lake Station, but the small 5,000 watt station seemed destined for closure once the new station opened. It was reported that “WSB received seven letters in one day from listeners in Hawaii stating they heard WSB with ease and perfect clarity.”

The East Lake station manager, Albert Shropshire, moved to his new apartment in the Tucker station. The Tucker station, today in the middle of Northlake Festival shopping center, is a story for another day. ✦



Photos of the modern, furnished apartment where station engineer Albert Shropshire lived with his wife, Marion. From the Atlanta Journal, February 9, 1930.



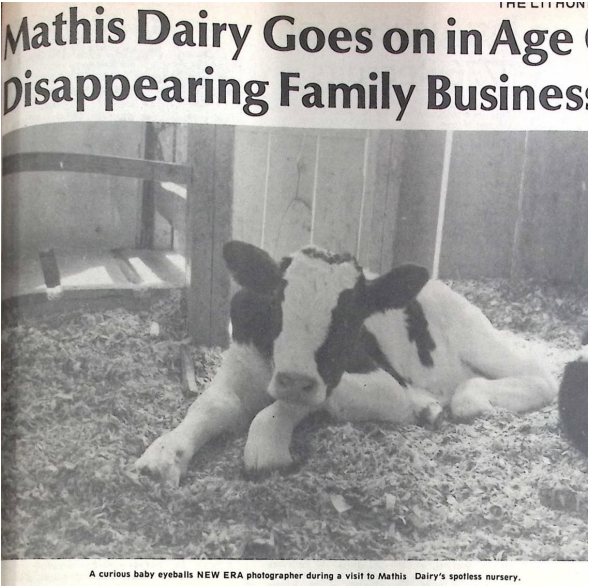
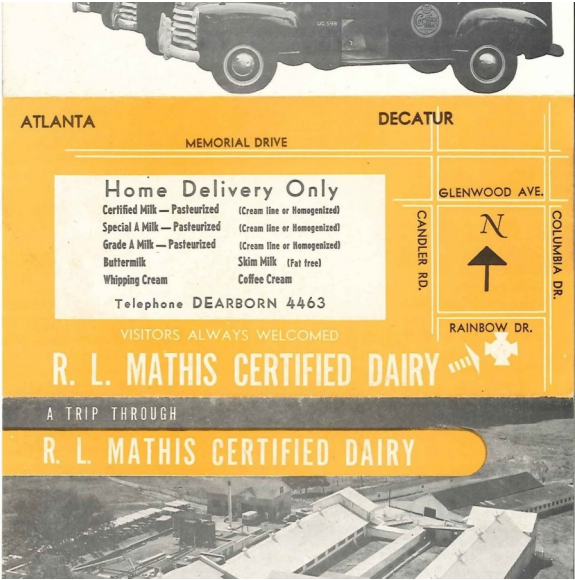
WSB East Lake transmitter, circa 1930. WSB Radio Records, Popular Music and Culture Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library.



Three engineers stand next to the transmitter building at WSB's East Lake antenna tower. The man in the middle is A.W. Shropshire, circa 1930. WSB Radio Records, Popular Music and Culture Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library.



WSB towers on the Biltmore Hotel, circa 1930. WSB Radio Records, Popular Music and Culture Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library.



Mathis Dairy, still going strong in 1976. Did YOU go to Mathis Dairy on a school field trip?

Join * Renew * Give

We hope you enjoyed the summer 2026 issue of Times of DeKalb. Please consider making a financial contribution through joining, rejoining, or a one time donation. Your generous contribution to the DeKalb History Center will provide you with a year-long membership that includes our quarterly journal 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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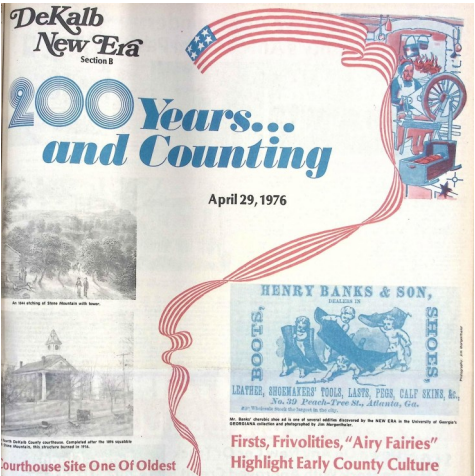
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| ☐ Guardian—\$2,500 | ☐ Contributor—\$250 | ☐ Household—\$65 |
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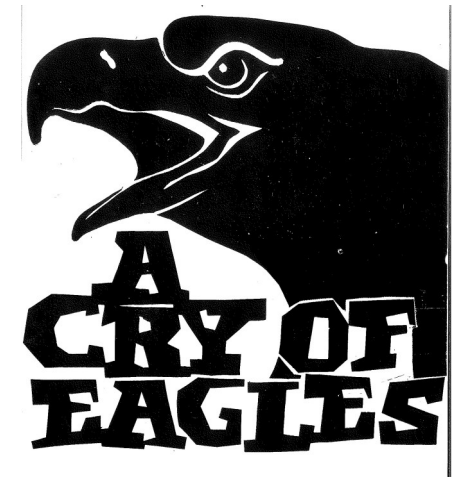
Please mail this form with your contribution to: DeKalb History Center, 101 East Court Square, Decatur GA 30030 or call 404-373-1088 ext. 1003. Visit our website www.dekalbhistory.org to pay online.

A Look Back at 1976

Check out these items from our archives related to the 1976 Bicentennial. These items are available for viewing—contact us to make an appointment.



From the *DeKalb New Era*, April 1976.



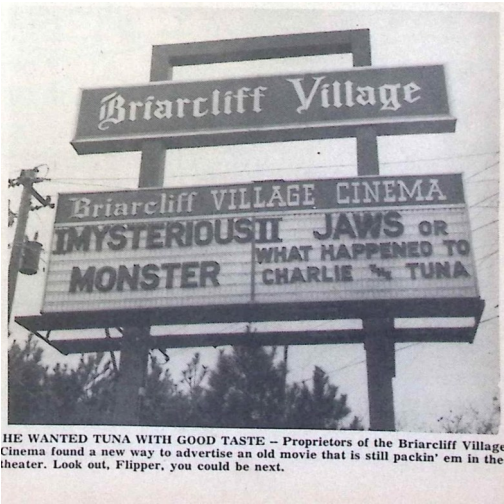
During the Bicentennial year of 1976, DeKalb County Parks and Recreation, DeKalb Federal Savings and Loan, and DeKalb Chamber of Commerce presented a play called "A Cry of Eagles," portraying the story of Baron DeKalb and the American Revolution.



1976 Bicentennial license plate



Photo of the Bicentennial Wagon Train from the *Decatur-DeKalb News* newspaper.



Billboard from Briarcliff Village Cinema.



Georgia Bicentennial, 1976, from Decatur DeKalb and DeKalb News Sun photo collection.

Upcoming Programs



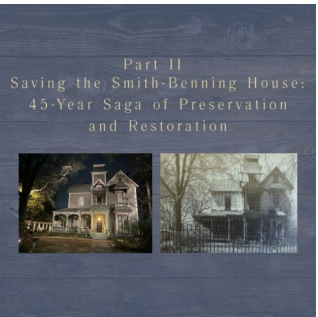
August 5—6

Summer Book Sale and Happy Hour with Destination Books

Shop the DeKalb History Center’s large collection of books covering topics varying from the city of Doraville to African American life in DeKalb County to the history of Stone Mountain. Books will be available for purchase with prices varying from \$1 – \$100. Free to attend!

August 5, 12:00—4:00 pm

August 6, 12:00—7:00 pm, Museum Late Hours 5:00—7:00 pm



August 13

Hops at the History Center: Part II, Smith-Benning House Preservation with Robert Craig

6:30—7:30 pm

Join us for the second “must see” presentation of the three-part series on the preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of the Smith-Benning House (c.1883-5), Robert Craig illustrates the prodigious task of saving one of DeKalb County’s most significant private houses. Free to attend!



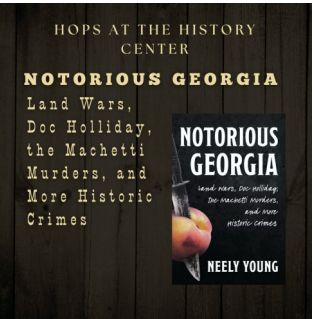
August 18, September 8

Decatur Architecture Walking Tour 2026

Attendees will see a variety of building styles, from classical to modern, spanning both commercial and residential architecture. Each tour highlights distinct architectural themes and topics. This is a ticketed tour.

8/18 7:00 PM - Tour Theme: Historical/ Revival Styles

9/8 6:00 PM - Tour Theme: Post-Modern



October 8

Hops at the History Center: Notorious Georgia with Neely Young

6:30—7:30 pm

Dark history lives beneath Georgia’s southern charm. In this gripping work of Georgia true crime history, veteran journalist Neely Young investigates the Peach State’s most chilling stories of crime, corruption, racial violence, and injustice. This is a ticketed program.

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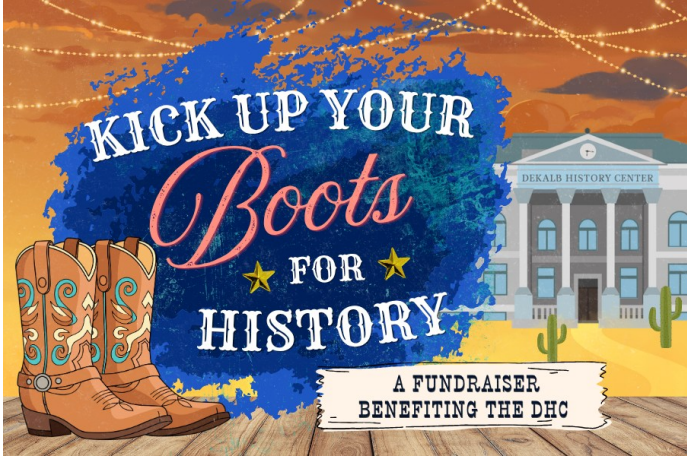
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Kick Up Your Boots for History, Annual Silent Auction



Grab your cowboy hats and boots for an evening of delicious food, dancing, and a rootin’ tootin’ good time.

This year’s party will feature mouthwatering food from seven of our preferred caterers, an open bar with themed cocktails, and of course your chance to bid and win an array of goodies from local businesses. We will be holding a Best Dressed contest, so bring your glitziest western garb and saddle up for some friendly competition.

Saturday, August 29

6:30—10:00 pm

DeKalb History Center

Tickets: \$40 for DHC Members, \$50 for General Public

Silent Auction

The party includes a silent auction fundraiser; this is where we need community support. Please consider joining other generous restaurants, artists, hotels and merchants while you support DeKalb's only countywide History Center.

Your donation will be tax-deductible as allowed by law. Please complete the following form and return by mail, email, or in person.

Pick-up or delivery should be completed on or before **Friday, August 21** ✦



Donation Form



Tickets

Museum Update: New Exhibit Coming Soon



What does it mean to be a DeKalb Countian? As the nation celebrates its 250th anniversary, we chose to zoom in and focus on the individual stories within our own county. Our distinct narratives weave together to make DeKalb County unique, but we also see the similarities to other communities across the United States. In times of uncertainty – as well as times of ease – a connection with one’s community is invaluable.

Our new exhibit, *Together*, will highlight DeKalb County citizens through photographs, oral histories, an all-ages interactive activity, and artifacts from our collection.

Please consider participating in this exhibit!

We are asking current, and former residents of DeKalb County to share their fondest memories with us via photographs. The memories you share can be from any location and may be included in *Together*. Those who donate pictures or items to be included in the exhibit will be invited to attend the VIP Opening Reception! ✦

Oral History Spotlight: James L. Brown

By Monica El-Amin, African American History Coordinator

We have been sharing highlights from our oral history interviews on Social Media. Here’s one you may have missed.

Mr. James L. Brown was born in 1946, the second oldest of eight children. He shared insights into his upbringing within Lynwood Park and how it shaped the rest of his life. He grew up in poverty with parents James R. Brown, a truck driver for a construction company, and Nancy Church-Brown, a domestic worker.

Mr. Brown’s family moved into a duplex in Lynwood Park in 1953; many neighbors lived in apartments. He attended the Lynwood Park School from 1953 to 1964, graduating with honors. Following his high school graduation, he immediately joined the workforce as a janitor at a local grocery store in Chamblee. From there, he worked his way up, becoming a head clerk, and participated in a management training program.

In 1967, he took on a second job at the Federal Reserve Bank as a night shift custodian. The next year, he was chosen to train in computer operations and data processing. By 1969, he was promoted to computer room supervisor. He then



James L. Brown, 2026.

obtained his Bachelor of Business Administration in 1974 at Georgia State University. In 1976, he became the first African American to be promoted to the Assistant Vice President of the Federal Reserve System. At the age of 58, Brown retired from the Federal Reserve to pursue a career in the ministry. He worked in this field for 15 years as a church pastor and the Director of Retirement Planning for the National Church of God, retiring again in 2020.

Today, he is happily retired, spending time with his wife, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. If you or someone you know is interested in sharing their story about Lynwood Park or other places in DeKalb, we’d be thrilled to hear from you. Reach out to us! ✦

The Beavers of Legacy Park

By Marissa Howard, Programs & Membership Coordinator

Did you know that Decatur Legacy Park is home to a thriving community of beavers?

DeKalb History Center members recently had the opportunity to explore the natural side of Legacy Park, where we learned about its industrious beavers.

Beavers are an integral part of the park’s ecosystem, and help to keep it balanced. Before widespread development, DeKalb County contained natural floodplains and wetlands. Over time, farms and urban development altered many of these waterways. You can see this everywhere, sometimes in your own backyard. Evidence includes deep trenches (manmade and natural) that aren’t original creeks, and strong erosion along existing river or creek banks. New water paths lack wildlife and fauna to keep them in balance. Floodplains and wetlands can cause destruction to buildings developed too close to them, but these areas act as natural sponges,

dispersing the water and managing storm water runoff. Beavers, nature’s engineers, are driven to build dams that slow water flow, create ponds, and trap sediment. These changes support a rich diversity of plants and wildlife, while improving the land. During the tour, we saw five beaver dams up close at Legacy Park and learned how these rodents contribute to a complex and diverse ecosystem. Unfortunately, we didn’t see any beavers (they were all sleeping), but we still enjoyed seeing their hard work in person!

Many thanks to Tony Able, from Southeast Beaver Alliance and Joey Goodall for leading the tour. ✦



DHC Members walking through Legacy Park.