



HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORY

One cannot visit our beautiful county without immediately inquiring about our county's rich history that makes us what we are. Just the approach from Highway 15 North, our beautiful Historic Courthouse, has greeted native Hancock Counties and travelers alike for over 130 years. This "vista", described by many authors, is like none other in the state of Georgia. Her Majesty (designed by Alexander Bruce and built by James Smith from 1881-1883) burned on August 11, 2014, but has "risen from the ashes" and was Re-Dedicated on the 2nd Anniversary of the Fire, August 11, 2016.

Hancock County was created in 1793 as Georgia's 15th county, and the City of Sparta was chartered in 1805. Although created over 200 years ago, Hancock County was not virgin land untouched by man. Creek Indians, mound builders, lived here in the fertile lands around Shoulder bone Creek, and extensive archeological research has shown that Shoulder bone was the capital of a prehistoric province, known as Ocute, which survived well into the sixteenth century. The 1100 acre site, with

5 distinguishable mounds, has remained in private hands since 1917, but has great potential for tourism.

Hancock County is one of the most historic counties in the State of Georgia, and as a result of a historic survey completed in 2001, more than 600 historic structures and sites were identified and chronicled. According to Tracy Dean, a Columbus-based architectural historian responsible for the survey, "Hancock County has a concentration of Historic Architecture you won't see anywhere else in the state of Georgia." Hancock County has many properties listed with the National Register of Historic Places. Among these you will find: The Camilla-Zack Community Center Project(1650 acres, 8 buildings, 3 structures), the Hurt-Rives Plantation(now known as Fort Creek Farm)(11,230 acres, 10 buildings, 8 structures, 1 object—considered by Georgia's Department of Natural Resources/Historic Preservation Division as the most significant example of a Georgia plantation in the state of Georgia), The Jewell Historic District (560 acres, 37 buildings), the Linton Historic District(3650 acres, 18 buildings), the Pearson-Boyer Plantation(2080 acres, 6 buildings), the Sparta Historic District (50 acres, 26 buildings), and Shoulder bone Mounds(1100 acre Prehistoric Indian site). Our National Register properties can be found here:

<http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/GA/Hancock/state.html>

Five Georgia Governors have hailed from Hancock County: William Rabun (1817-1819), Charles McDonald (1839-1843), Charles Jones Jenkins (1865-1868), William Northern (1890-1894), and Nathaniel Harris (1915-1917). Equally notable people called Hancock County home: Bishop Lucious Holsey, founder of the Colored (now Christian) Methodist Episcopal Church, and also founder of Paine College in Augusta; Bishop George Foster Pierce, a nationally recognized bishop of the Methodist Conference; the Zack and Camilla Hubert Family whose

contributions have gained county, state, and national recognition; and David Dickson, also known as the “Prince of Farmers” who farmed 30,000 acres of land and was responsible for the invention of modern farming methods, including crop rotation and the use of guano as fertilizer.

Hancock Counties are very fortunate to have an assortment of books chronicling its heritage (most are out-of-print, but most can be found at the Sparta-Hancock County Library). This list continues to “grow” as books are brought to my attention, but currently, we have identified the following and they are listed in the order they were written or compiled:

- *David Dickson's & James M. Smith's Farming*(1910) by George Hunnicut for The Cultivator Publishing Company, Atlanta, GA
- *Hancock County, Georgia Early Records*(1965) compiled by Alden Associates, Albany, Georgia.
- *In Daddy Jesse's Kingdom*(1971) by Mary Roxie Edwards.
- *Architecture of Middle Georgia*(1972) by John Linley.
- *This History of Hancock County, Georgia*(1974), Volumes I & II by Elizabeth Wiley Smith.
- *Profile of a Black Heritage* (1977) by Dr. Lester Russell.
- *Marriages of Hancock County, Georgia 1806-1850* (1977) by Martha Lou Houston.
- *Black Boss* (1982) by John Rozier.
- *Granny Was a Teacher* (1987) by Eugenia Fox Trawick.
- *The Granite Farm Letters* (1988) edited by John Rozier.
- *The Land Between, A History of Hancock County, Georgia to 1940* (1990) by Forrest Shivers.
- *Ambiguous Lives, Free Women of Color in Rural Georgia. 1789-1879* (1991) by Adele Logan Alexander.

- *From a Vision of Plenty, The Heritage of Rural Georgia Women* (1991) by Lenoir W. Hale.
- *When Servants Ride Horses*(1992) by Dorothy Henderson Morgan.
- *Down the Road* (1993) compiled by Marguerite Goldsby Gaissert (collection of stories authored by her husband, John Gaissert for the *The Sparta Ishmaelite*.
- *Woman of Color, Daughter of Privilege* (1995) by Kent Anderson Leslie.
- *Oconee River: Tales to Tell* (1995) by Katherine Bowman Walters.
- *The Houses of Hancock 1785-1865* (1996) by John Rozier.
- *Land Deed Genealogy of Hancock County, Georgia* (1997) by Helen and Tim Marsh.
- *Hancock County, Georgia Early Newspaper Abstracts "Farmer's Gazette" 1803-1804, 1806-1807* (2001) by Faye Stone Poss.
- *Reminiscences from the Life of Mrs. E.F. Schell*(2004) copied and bound by Tilmon and Anne Chamlee.
- *Cemeteries of Hancock County* (2004) by Susan J. Harrington and Friends of Hancock Cemeteries. Also found on-line at www.friendsofhancockcemeteries.com

We have barely "scratched the surface" of Hancock's rich history, but we are convinced that we are a "diamond in the rough" for generating sales tax dollars for both the State of Georgia and Hancock County. Now that Her Majesty has been rebuilt, Hancock County will soon embark on building our *Heritage Tourism Industry* for the benefit of all.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit with us today, and hope you come again soon!