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## Buckhead Heritage Society Dedicated to Protecting Historic Treasures

Recent victories include saving historic cemeteries and preserving real-life stories of early Buckhead through its Oral History Project.

Posted by [Lisa Frank](#), February 21, 2011 at 05:22 PM

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Have you ever wondered why that historic wooden church on Arden Road is the only building on the street that's not a multimillion dollar home?

In the late 1800s, James H. Smith, a farmer, one of Buckhead's largest landowners and former slave owner, deeded the 2-acre Arden Road site to be used in perpetuity "for a church of colored persons." [New Hope AME Church](#) still holds worship services there, some 135 years after Smith's death.

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Stories like these are documented and preserved by the [Buckhead Heritage Society](#), a 400-member nonprofit dedicated to protecting Buckhead's historic sites and stories. Executive Director Erica Danylchak spoke with Patch about priority projects and why historic preservation matters.

One of the organization's signature projects is the three-year restoration of Harmony Grove Cemetery on West Paces Ferry at Chatham roads. Few people realize it's even there. The public is invited on Saturday, March 12, for free tours of the property, with background information on its rich history. The 1 p.m. tour will be led by Buckhead Heritage founder and President Wright Mitchell; the 3 p.m. tour will be led by Danylchak.

Though she regrets never meeting Atlanta's legendary historian and Buckhead resident Franklin Garrett (1906-2000), Danylchak knows his work well. Any research project starts with his massive book "Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of its People and Events." Several people have asked her if Garrett, a debonair walking encyclopedia of Atlanta history, full of passion and flair, can ever be replaced. So far, he appears to be irreplaceable. The other bible of Buckhead history is [Susan Kessler Barnard's](#) book "Buckhead: A Place for All Time." Yet beyond those two works, documentation of Buckhead history is relatively limited.

To fill the gaps, Buckhead Heritage launched an oral history project, spearheaded by board member Chad Wright. Ten oral histories have been recorded on video. Excerpts are available on the group's [YouTube channel](#). There's a long list of other elders to interview, with the oldest Buckhead natives taking precedence. Patch readers are welcome to submit suggestions of other good candidates to interview. By speaking with people who actually grew up here, their real-life stories and memories can be captured for future generations, Danylchak said.

After all, Buckhead has changed dramatically in the last 100 years, transforming from a distant place "out in the country," to a sleepy suburban community once the trolley started running from downtown north on Peachtree Street in 1907, to the cosmopolitan urban center it is today.

She smiles at the term "new urbanism," because it's not new at all. Those concepts of a mix of residential and commercial space are the same ones used to plan Atlanta's first neighborhoods in downtown, Midtown and Inman Park.

With so much information coming at us 24-7, a well-designed streetscape with historic architecture can be more soothing and centering than ever, she believes.

"We can be a resource for developers about the benefits of historic preservation and the financial incentives available at the state and federal level," Danylchak explains.

While living in Boston where she earned a bachelor's of art in history at Boston University, she experienced a city that respects its history. "They're reaping tremendous benefits now with heritage tourism as one of their largest industries," she adds. Today, the former research manager of the Atlanta History Center's archives, who holds a master's in heritage preservation, lives in a 1924 apartment building in Midtown.

When Patch asked about a piece of Buckhead history most people don't know, Danylchak told us the story of Macedonia Park, a place "where history was erased," she explained. A once vibrant African-American community near Pharr Road and Piedmont with its own shops and restaurants, its residents were "forcibly removed in the 1940s" to build a public park, originally named Bagley Park for a Macedonia Park resident, then later renamed Frankie Allen Park to honor a beloved baseball umpire from Buckhead.

Buckhead Heritage successfully prevented a developer from paving over Mount Olive Cemetery, a historically significant site that is the only remaining visual evidence of Macedonia Park.

There were other all African-American communities in Buckhead and Brookhaven where workers lived near the wealthy families they served. Another was known as Johnson Town at Lenox Road

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Hunt Archbold (Editor)

and Oak Valley. Today, a Target, Staples and Filene's Basement have replaced the modest homes of Buckhead's former maids, butlers, field hands and caregivers.

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**Peter Polites** February 21, 2011 at 03:10 PM

Very good article about The Buckhead Heritage Society, an organization I knew very little of. I particularly liked learning of the African-American community that once existed in Buckhead. Here's a story of the forgotten poor that adds a deeper richness to Buckhead community.

Recommend

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**Wright Mitchell** February 21, 2011 at 07:46 PM

Thanks to Lisa and the Patch for the feature on Buckhead Heritage! The Patch is a great addition to the Buckhead publication scene. Keep up the good work!

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Hi there, Buckhead parents! Please take this quick survey.

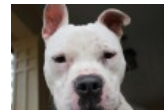
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**Announcements** July 31, 2013 at 05:06 PM

Caren West Pr



**elisa cousins** February 21, 2011 at 09:18 PM

I wished it was possible to make more of these "histories" available for the public (mostly the transplants like me and younger generations). Socrates said "know thyself" and the best way to start understanding oneself is to understand where we come from. We are nothing without a collective memory and we are bound to repeat our mistakes over and over again if we forget our past. Thank You Elisa (from Modena Italy-2001)

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**Boyd Leake** February 21, 2011 at 09:30 PM

Buckhead Heritage is doing a great job. Keep up the good work!

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**Erica Danylchak** February 21, 2011 at 11:31 PM

Elisa, Buckhead Heritage wholeheartedly agrees! Part of our mission is to foster a conscious respect within the community for its rich and diverse history. We have begun sharing the most remarkable, poignant, or funny excerpts from our oral history interviews, for instance, on YouTube so that a wide audience can have access to these stories. We will also be sharing entire transcripts of these interviews on our website [www.buckheadheritage.com](http://www.buckheadheritage.com) in the coming weeks. In addition, we offer educational lectures and programs throughout the year that highlight the most interesting aspects of our community's history. We will continue to work diligently to foster a greater understanding of where we have come from. Erica

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**Pat Reynolds** April 24, 2012 at 07:17 PM

Have just discovered your web sight and am so interested. I am a long time resident of the Buckhead area and love it's history. Thank you for working hard to preserve it. Pat Reynolds

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Terri Hale French

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Suzy Swindle

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