



gam

Georgia Association of Museums

# Spring '22

GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2022

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### MUSE

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### Newsletter/PR

Michael Lachowski  
Andrea Miskewicz

### Nominations

Ephraim Rotter

### Program

Rebecca Bush  
Ashleigh Oatts

### Web Site

Tom Bowden

UPDATED 4-2-2022

On the drive back from Thomasville, I had to pull my car over in the small town of Sylvester. I began jotting down notes, ideas, and to-do lists before these thoughts slipped away into the ether. With goals now safely on paper, I got back on the road to Atlanta.

The post-conference flurry of inspiration was inevitable, given the creative thinking, innovation, and empathy on display in Thomasville during our 2022 GAM conference. I am constantly in awe of my peers and their forward momentum. Our GAM members produce programs, exhibits, research, and outreach that broaden our minds, reframe our world, and extend a compassionate hand during an uncertain time. We are achieving excellence while contending with the challenges of stretched resources and fluctuating environments. Even on the days when we've reached our mental and emotional thresholds, we are moving forward - one small step at a time. How can you not be inspired by that?

As we look towards better days ahead, I challenge you to find inspiration in the smallest moments. Who knows what it may result in—a new donor or partner, a reframed program, happier colleagues, or the confidence to say no? Better yet, nurture an atmosphere for others to transcend limitations and find possibility. I'll continue to find inspiration in you—the members of GAM.

**Marcy Breffle**  
GAM President



# 2022 Conference Review

## Thomasville Thanks You!

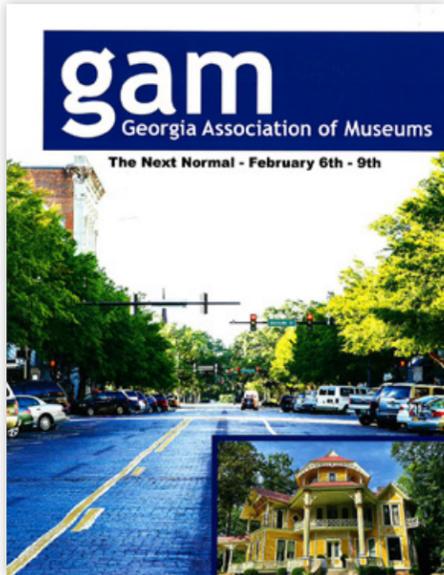
From February 6th through February 9th, Thomasville welcomed more than 100 museum professionals to Georgia's Rose City for the 2022 Georgia Association of Museums Conference. Beginning with the Meet and Greet cocktail party on the second floor of the Three Toms Tavern, four days of educational and therapeutic sessions and workshops were buttressed by group trips to Pebble Hill, Jack Hadley's Black History Museum, the Thomasville History Center, Lapham-Patterson House, and the Thomasville Center for the Arts. Smaller groups visited Pope's Museum and took a walking tour of Downtown Thomasville. For two days, visits by furry friends from the Thomasville – Thomas County Humane Society provided a much needed mental health break.

The City of Thomasville estimates the conference had a \$100,000 economic impact and looks forward to hosting more small-to-medium size conferences at the new downtown Marriott in the future. Thomasville-based foundations gifted an additional \$8500 to the conference, allowing GAM's costs to remain low without skimping on amenities. Finally, one more huge thank you to the Thomasville Host Committee, GAM's Program Committee, but most importantly to the membership for making the 2022 conference so memorable and impactful. Can't wait to see you all again in Cartersville in 2023!

**Ephraim Rotter**  
Past GAM President



COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT, 207 S. DAWSON STREET, THOMASVILLE, GA 31792



A DOG-EARED THOMASVILLE PROGRAM



SEE MORE 2022 CONFERENCE PHOTOS ON INSTAGRAM @GAMUSEUMS AND AT FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/GAMUSEUMS





SEE MORE 2022 CONFERENCE PHOTOS ON INSTAGRAM @GAMUSEUMS AND AT FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/GAMUSEUMS



MELISSA SWINDELL,  
GAM AWARDS COMMITTEE

### Multimedia



**Booth Western Art Museum**  
*American Indians: Cultures and Contributions Virtual Field Trip*  
Booth's Virtual Field Trips saw over 2500 third grade students and educators during 2020-2021, extending the Museum's reach to new remote audiences. The Booth shared authentic stories of indigenous cultures represented through the museum's collection of American Indian art and artifacts. A free educator guide, free teacher professional development and scholarships were made available to all public schools.



**Georgia Southern University**  
*Saints & Sinners: Salvation and Damnation in Latin American Folk Art*  
Examining approximately 150 pieces of art covering 1000 years of history, "Saints and Sinners" explores how Europeans, Americans, and Africans wrestled with the existential questions of life and death in a uniquely Latin American way.

Prior to the installation of the exhibit, there were two nationally publicized incidents of anti-Latinx discrimination at Georgia Southern. While distressed by these developments, collector and GSU professor Michael Van Wagenen believes that the best way to fight bad

information is with good information. The exhibit is bilingual, and has engaged the online community with 205 posts, many of which have sparked lively and, at times, difficult discussions with the diverse followers of the page. There have been over 9,500 individual likes and comments on the posts. "Saints and Sinners" also includes a 45-minute documentary film that will remain publicly available after the exhibit closes in 2022.

## Education



### Albany Convention and Visitor Bureau

#### *Southwest Georgia Learning Initiative*

The Southwest Georgia Learning Initiative was a collaborative project between Albany Convention and Visitors Bureau (Albany CVB), Chehaw Park and Zoo (CPZ), Flint RiverQuarium (FRQ), and Throneateska Heritage Center (THC) to fill an immediate education need during the pandemic and create a permanent digital library of existing K-12 programming.

They created Thirty-four asynchronous lessons (grades K-12), a live ten week virtual series (100 lessons for grades K-12), provided nine virtual teacher's workshop, and delivered 100 take home kits and virtual lessons for students with special needs. This project conservatively had a reach of 12,187 people with the videos, classes and kits.

### Marietta History Center

#### *Tombstone Cleaning Workshop*

Tombstone cleaning workshops at the Marietta City are hands-on workshops using methods that are considered safe by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Parks Service. They taught guests the proper tools, products, and techniques to use to clean a tombstone, while doing no harm to the stone or the landscape. The workshops are done with small groups of no more than 10 people. The workshops begin with a short tour of portions of the cemetery. Along with the tour, stops are made to show the progress of tombstones that have already been cleaned.

## Advocacy



### JoAnn Wood, nominated by Museum of History and Holocaust Education and Booth Western Art Museum

Ms. JoAnn Wood is retired Social Studies Program Specialist for the Georgia Department of Education and former educator. She has served for many years on both museums' advisory boards, not only providing program support, but connecting our museum to the Georgia Council for the Social Studies. She has been an advocate for Georgia museums for many years regularly attending educational events at institutions throughout the metro-Atlanta area and beyond. As a state employee, she was always advocating for museum opportunities for students and teachers, and now that she is retired, she continues to do so. (See Ms. Wood's comment at the end of the awards section.)

## Emerging Museum Professionals

### Allison Moore, Heritage Sandy Springs

In 2019, Allison became the Director of Historic Resources and Education Programs at Heritage Sandy Springs, during a time of transition for the organization. The entire staff had turned over and the non-profit was in a financial crisis. Despite this chaos, Allison remained the consummate professional, a hard job even for seasoned professionals, and she was only a few months out of graduate school. Allison was the only staff member to remain when the organization finally closed for good due to Covid, in 2020. She stayed

on to manage the safe transition of artifacts from non-profit to local government, completing a full inventory in the process.



### Keith Smith, Columbus Museum

Keith Smith has made a significant impact in Columbus' arts and culture community. Keith began working in museums in 2015 while still a student at Columbus State University (CSU), serving as a studio technician for the Art Department and assisting with the installation of nearly a dozen exhibitions each year. After graduation, he continued to work at CSU and played a key role in the opening of the Bo Bartlett Center. Keith fabricated all pedestals, vitrines, and benches for the galleries, as well as assisting with the installation of Bartlett's monumental paintings.

Keith's intuitiveness and dedication have led him to take on a growing number of responsibilities. Just a year after his hiring, he was promoted to Lead Preparator/Art & Artifacts Handler. In this role, he sources installation supplies, coordinates with contractors, and consults with the exhibition designer on budgets. He works closely with the assistant preparator, offering leadership and a collaborative spirit. Keith is an unassuming but valuable mentor, training multiple interns in exhibition design and safety techniques. Object security and safety is a key concern for him, and he never rushes or cuts corners for the sake of efficiency.

## Museum Exhibition #1 (<\$1,000)



### Claire Nix & Emily Kimbell

#### *A Newnan Girl Away at School*

The exhibit repurposed a supply closet and staged a "dorm" room with artifacts from Margaret Trapnell Glover's college trunk.

"A Newnan Girl Away at School" is a small exhibit—it is literally a closet—but within the small space is a glance at a young woman's collegiate experience in the late 1920s-early 1930s.

The exhibit team cleared out a supply closet, took out the shelving, removed the door, and had a light installed, and designed a vinyl cling title. Using artifacts that the McRitchie-Hollis Museum received from Margaret Trapnell Glover's family, which included her college trunk, notes, letters, assignments, drawings, sheet music, editorials, from when Margaret Glover (née Trapnell) attended Georgia State College for Women (now Georgia College and State University) in Milledgeville, GA. The exhibit is inspired by a dorm room--in it, there is a desk, typewriter, bulletin boards with some of Margaret's papers and effects displayed, and a rug.

## Museum Exhibition #2 (\$1,000 - \$25,000)



### Pebble Hill Plantation

#### *Green Arrow Tour at Pebble Hill Plantation*

The goal of the Green Arrow Tour is to interpret historical landscaping and enhance the visitor experience by adding a self-guided tour option for visitors to wander at their own pace, observing and learning about Pebble Hill's historical landscape. The tour is based on Pebble Hill archives of the 1920s and 1930s, Pebble Hill owner Kate Hanna Ireland Harvey who commissioned landscape architect, Ethelwyn Harrison, to develop a master plan for the property and highlights and interprets twelve locations throughout the grounds and gardens which feature historic and native plantings.



### Chipley Historical Center

#### *The 2021 Chipley Historical Center*

On September 29th, 2021 the Chipley Historical Center reopened with a new building addition with all new exhibitions throughout the museum. The exhibition space was divided into eleven sections. Each section was assigned a space and a banner hanging from the ceiling tells the visitor which

section they are currently visiting. Like many small museums they used resources wisely and creatively purchasing display cases from a jewelry store going out of business as well as an antique dealer. The text panels are printed on canvas and the artifact labels are printed on heavy paper. The panels were designed using the program Canva and our photographs were scanned at a high DPI and inserted into the text. On opening day Chipley Historical Center saw more than 200 guests.

## Museum Exhibition #4 (>\$100,000)



### Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia

#### *Emma Amos: Color Odyssey*

The exhibition "Emma Amos: Color Odyssey," organized by Shawnya L. Harris at the Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, included works by Atlanta artist Emma Amos who was best known for her bold and colorful mixed-media paintings that examine the intersection of race, class, gender and privilege in the art world and society at large. Amos' large-scale canvases often incorporate African fabrics and content drawn from her personal odyssey as an artist, her interest in icons in art and world history and her sometimes tenuous engagement with these themes as a woman of color.

Harris took five years to assemble the exhibition, doing significant amounts of research and recruiting other scholars to the project as well as artists who knew Amos. She selected 63 of

Amos' works from across the decades of her long career, borrowed from public and private collections across the country, illustrating all of Amos' different phases as an artist. Harris also incorporated, in the museum's time-based-media gallery, a filmed trapeze performance by Atlanta artists inspired by one of Amos' prints and hung the print near it, showing the artist's enduring impact on young creators and the community.

## Museum Professional



### Shawnya L. Harris

Since she was hired in 2015 as the Georgia Museum of Art's inaugural Larry D. and Brenda A. Thompson Curator of African American and African Diasporic Art, Shawnya Harris has made a serious impact on the state of Georgia.

In conjunction with the Thompsons' gift of 100 works by African American artists, Harris' steady, diligent work has helped incorporate those works into the museum's permanent collection galleries, where university and K-12 students as well as other museum visitors see them every day. She has organized monographic exhibitions of the work of Black artists Emma Amos (recently selected as one of the best exhibitions of 2021 by the New York Times), Kevin Cole, Richard Hunt, Mary Lee Bendolph and Michael Ellison, raising their profiles in the art world and giving them the sustained, intelligent attention they deserve.

She teaches art history at UGA's Lamar Dodd School of Art, mentors

and advises program majors there and serves on thesis and programming committees. She lectures widely and willingly and serves on numerous professional service committees: the Penn Center Advisory Board, the Black Craftspeople Digital Archive (BCDA) Advisory Board, the Mellon Summer Academy at the High Museum of Art and more. It is no surprise that in 2021 she was selected as a Center for Curatorial Leadership Fellow, one of only 12 from around the country.

Harris' work has been notable in every year since she was hired, but this year, of all years, she deserves this award, pushing through a pandemic to fulfill the Emma Amos exhibition that she had planned for a long time and doing her best to push the art world to embrace and lift up new voices.

## Patron



### May B. and Howell Hollis, nominated by Historic Oakland Foundation

May B. and Howell Hollis have been ardent champions, supporters, and leaders of Historic Oakland Foundation for over three decades. Under their visionary leadership Historic Oakland Foundation has found new ways to redefine what a historic cemetery can be and continually pushed for expansion and growth.

May B's tenure as Board Chair in 2008 coincided with the tornado that ripped through downtown Atlanta and caused millions of dollars of damage to

the historic site. Under her leadership, the organization worked with City, State, and Federal Officials to restore the Cemetery. In her role as the chair of the Development Committee, May B. has continually worked to introduce new friends to HOF and build a base of community support that has led to the current, first-ever, capital campaign: Living History. May B. co-chairs the campaign with Valerie Jackson, Mayor Maynard Jackson's widow, and collectively they are bringing the single largest investment into historic Oakland Cemetery, including the largest restoration project ever, the rehabilitation of the 1899 Bell Tower, and the construction of a new Visitors Center.

Howell Hollis, a working attorney, has served as HOF's legal counsel for over a decade providing sage guidance on all matters especially the recent acquisition of land outside the Cemetery's gate to house the future Visitors Center. Moreover, May B and Howell's visionary leadership led to significant early investments in the Capturing the Spirit of Oakland Halloween tours to hire script writers, a director, and professional lighting and sound experts that, in their fifteenth year, has made these tours a staple of the Fall calendar in Atlanta.

Without the leadership of May B. and Howell Hollis Historic Oakland Foundation would not be able to have the impact that it does to preserve, restore, enhance, and share Oakland Cemetery for hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, and for generations to come.

## Special Project Category #1 (<\$1,000)



### Georgia Museum of Agriculture Gallery

*The Discovery, Research, and Identification of a Rare Artifact and its Journey from NY to GA, and the Connections Discovered Along the Way*  
Donna Hatcher had been the professor of art at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College since 2000. When Donna passed away in 2020, the college, museum, and curator Polly Huff all suffered and mourned her loss. Shortly after Donna Hatcher passed way, her parents made contact with Polly. They were trying to find out more about what they thought was a rare artifact from Donna's estate, which had been discovered in a safety deposit box at a bank, which had held it for the last two decades. What the Hatchers discovered was indeed Donna's 1899 Gaskins/Martin Harp Mandolin, a rare and unique instrument. Above all, it was a rare artifact with a seemingly lost story, which is the type of artifact that is at the top of Huff's research interest list. Huff also took the project as a personal last favor to her late friend and her spirit of love for the most unusual art objects and themes.

Several months of digging later, Huff and her intern provided ten sheets of information to the Hatchers, who are now in the process of finding the appropriate home for the harp mandolin.

## Special Project Category #2 (\$1,000 - \$25,000)



### Georgia Museum of Agriculture Gallery

*Beauty Amidst Trials: Capturing a Pandemic Year Through Two exhibits at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture Gallery*



### Thomasville History Center & Ethos Preservation

#### LP Future Project

"This House would make a great..." This phrase was used to help the Thomasville community think about how they envision the future of the Lapham-Patterson House. In partnership with Ethos Preservation, the History Center began work on an adaptive reuse plan for the Lapham-Patterson House (managed by the History Center). In October 2021, visioning sessions were held with staff, board and key stakeholders to ascertain their vision for the House. The partners then asked the public how they envisioned the House, with a month-long public art installation and social media campaign that will help guide the reuse discussions.

## Student Project



### Lucas Hardy

#### Preservation of Historic Weapons

Lucas Hardy's project for the semester was to determine how to properly store these Civil War era weapons that are part of the Newnan Coweta Historical Society's (NCHS) collection, and needed to be rehoused in a better and more permanent manner. Under the supervision of curator Noelle Hage-Atwood, Lucas wrote over one hundred condition reports of the weapons and conducted research on how best to store the weapons. Lucas learned how to oil the guns in our collection as well as researched best storage options. He wrote budget reports for the materials he would need to complete this project, presented his proposal to NCHS staff and board members, and finally, designed and constructed the gun racks that would ultimately house the weapons. The outcome of his work was a project well beyond his undergraduate status and on level with that of a professional curator. He worked effectively, efficiently, and at the highest professional level. His work greatly contributed to our museum and our collection.

## Museum Volunteer



### Jay Gorday, Tellus Science Museum

Jay Gorday has been a vital volunteer to the Curatorial department at Tellus Science Museum since 2008. His craftsmanship can be seen in nearly all of the permanent exhibit cases and temporary exhibitions in the museum. He also never hesitates to do demonstrations during special events.

Jay came to Tellus with experience in creating exhibit cases at local mineral shows, focusing on minerals, faceted gemstones, and education. He was one of a few volunteers who were asked to help lay out and install the mineral and fossil cases at Tellus before the museum opened in 2009. Jay's extensive exhibit experience and mineral knowledge helped create the exhibits in Tellus today.

Jay has served over 1300 hours since 2011 at Tellus, with many more before the museum even opened to the public. Jay continues to assist with installation and deinstallation of temporary exhibits and permanent exhibits, sometimes working 40 hours a week at Tellus. A successful exhibition depends on an efficient and organized installation team that works well with each other, and Jay is a key part of the team at Tellus.

### Institution Award



#### Georgia Writers Museum

Since 2014, Georgia Writers Museum Board of Directors has grown GWM into a sustainable operation that is now part of Georgia's museum landscape. As an all-volunteer board, this group conceptualized, founded, and launched

GWM and has maintained it for the past six years. Their tireless work has seen the purchase of their previously rented building and an adjoining building now giving exhibits and programs their own unique separate spaces. This occurred just in time as GWM welcomed Alice Walker for her 75th Birthday Celebration and needed the additional space to welcome the over 700 guests to Eatonton. Due to the success of this event, Eatonton was added to the Southern Literary Trail. Their continued volunteerism and fundraising helped them to hire their first Executive Director in 2021. GWM's Board of Directors' dedicated efforts in the non-profit arena have created a sustainable museum, and the first literary museum in the state dedicated to multiple award-winning Georgia writers, both past and present.

### Lifetime Achievement Award



#### Dr. Gordon Jones

Dr. Gordon Jones has gone over and beyond making sure that history is told in many ways. First, as the Military Historian, in 2018 Atlanta History Center revamped and opened the Cyclorama: The Big Picture. During the transition time from Grant Park to Atlanta History Center, Dr. Jones put in time and his heart to make sure this painting of the Battle of Atlanta was told in a new, innovative way.

Working with other staff from the AHC, this exhibition was made sure to tell unsung stories, and how perceptions, memory, and interpretation can be shaped, or misshaped, by a combination of art and

entertainment, myth and memory, cultural context, and current events during different eras. Opening this exhibition has led to thousands of museum guests to have a better understanding that one item can have many perspectives.

Since the pandemic, Gordon Jones has found other ways to reach out to the community. The Atlanta History Center offers Curated Experiences, providing attendees with the opportunity to explore history like never before. The Curated Experiences Tours are supposed to offer a unique tour, and no tour is exactly the same, as the experience will be influenced and enriched by attendee participation and discussion. Since offering Curated Experiences, Gordon is in high demand offering tours virtually and on-site of the Cyclorama exhibition.

Last, Dr. Jones was involved in helping to obtain and tell the story of the 127 USCT flag. This USCT flag was a purchase at auction, and the funding was provided by the Sheffield-Harrod Charitable Trust. The USCT Flag the AHC has is the Philadelphia's 127th Regiment of the United States Colored Infantry. The 127th Regiment was one of the 175 regiments that made up the United States Colored Troops during the U.S. Civil War. With purchasing this flag, we have started collecting additional USCT artifacts too. Now anyone can see Dr. Gordon Jones on the Atlanta History Center's website talk about these amazing artifacts. This is just one of the many new stories that AHC is sharing, and with Gordon's knowledge of Military History, he is excited to share this information with the world of these unsung heroes.

### A NOTE FROM OUR ADVOCACY AWARD RECIPIENT

Thank you to the Georgia Association of Museums, and especially to Andrea Miskewicz and Patty Dees, for this Advocacy Award. This is an honor which both humbles and moves me. I think my passion for museums stems from NOT having grown up with museums in my life. When I reached high school and college age and visited museums for the first time, a whole new world opened up for me. Later, as a fifth grade teacher and while working with social studies teachers at the district and state levels for more than 46 years, I have made a determined effort to connect teachers and students with the museums and museum educators who serve such a vital role in our lives. I'm so happy to be among you, even virtually, to count so many of you as friends, and to express my gratitude for this recognition. Thank you.

Sincerely, JoAnn Wood



ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR MICHELE RODGERS AND OUTGOING PRESIDENT AND THOMASVILLE HOST COMMITTEE CHAIR EPHRAIM ROTTER

# A Partnership for the Books

By Tyler Crafton-Karnes, Adult Program Coordinator and Accessibility Specialist, Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University

## It didn't seem like a conventional partnership for our museum, at first.

Sure, we took exhibits to local libraries, but why would we need to partner with the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS)? How could they benefit us and, in turn, we benefit them? After meeting Dustin Landrum, Director of Strategic Partnerships at GPLS, I discovered that working with this important Georgia institution would open doors to new and far-ranging audiences.

I heard Dustin speak at the 2018 GAM conference in Rome, Georgia, with Kate Stanton, formerly of the Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory University. During their session, they spoke about the value of the partnership between their institutions; how the Carlos was utilizing the resources of GPLS to spread the word about their museum. I thought, "We can do that! We should do that!" After the presentation, a colleague and I spoke to Dustin to offer our traveling exhibits to public libraries across the state. He was intrigued by the idea and we later set up a meeting to discuss it further.



During our initial meeting, we discussed ways in which public libraries across the state could access our traveling exhibits. There are sixty library systems in Georgia, and over four million Georgians have a library card. The possibilities with the library service were astonishing. GPLS already had a transportation and delivery system for books in place. Could exhibits be transported and delivered through the same system? Absolutely! The only problem we saw at the MHHE was our exhibits are only available during the summer months due to them being utilized by schools during the academic year. Dustin said this was not an issue and that libraries would be happy to take any exhibit we gave them during the summer months.

We decided to test this program by sending three traveling exhibits to library systems in South Georgia that summer. The best part for us was that Dustin would pick up the exhibits, schedule them, and deliver them to the transportation system. All we had to do was provide the exhibits and supplementary materials for the libraries to offer. The trial run was a huge success! The libraries and their patrons loved the exhibits and requested this be done again the next year. I even presented with Dustin, Kate, and Arianna Yandell (formerly at the Breman Museum) at the Georgia Library Conference in 2019 promoting our partnerships with GPLS.

Eventually, the MHHE was able to provide GPLS with a copy of our Georgia Journeys: Legacies of World War II traveling exhibit so they can pass it between libraries all year long. To make the exhibit more accessible to the general public, we are working with GPLS to create an audio guide with image descriptions for patrons who are blind, have low vision, or dyslexic. Not only can they use this audio tour, but we can upload it to our website for our visitors to use in schools, at community centers, or at our museum.

This partnership has been a fruitful, mutually beneficial one. We've been able to reach new audiences and GPLS has been able to provide resources to their libraries and patrons that are based in academic, historically sound research. Currently, GPLS is working with sixteen cultural and educational institutions across Georgia. Every partnership is different, but they all bring something beneficial and important for the public. They promote their museums and education centers to a broad audience. If you are interested in working with GPLS, think of what you can offer library patrons in our state. Then, set up a meeting with Dustin ([dlandrum@georgialibraries.org](mailto:dlandrum@georgialibraries.org)) and discuss the possibilities. They've done wonders for us, and they can do amazing things for your institution, as well.

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FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: ARIANA YANDELL (CURRENTLY WITH THE ATLANTA HISTORY CENTER, REPRESENTING THE BREMAN MUSEUM AT THIS EVENT), DUSTIN LANDRUM (GEORGIA PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE), KATE STANTON (CURRENTLY WITH OREGON HEALTH AND SCIENCE UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION, REPRESENTING THE MICHAEL C. CARLOS MUSEUM AT THIS EVENT), AND THE AUTHOR.

## Individual Member Feature

Melissa Swindell is the Executive Director of the Georgia Writers Museum in Eatonton, Georgia. Last year, she joined the Georgia Association of Museum's Board of Directors as the organization's Treasurer, and co-Chair of the Awards Committee.



She is a native of Atlanta, who attended Georgia State University receiving a Bachelor's in History. She relocated to Washington, DC where she earned a Master's in American Studies from George Washington University and a Master's in Museum Studies from Johns Hopkins University. In Washington, Melissa served as a Research Associate for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History.

I arrived at The Wren's Nest, historic home of Joel Chandler Harris (recorder of the Brer Rabbit folktales), where I was the Director and unbeknownst to me, waiting to meet me was the then Board President of the Georgia Writers Museum (GWM). Located 75 minutes away in Eatonton, Georgia, I heard about GWM but did not know much more than they represented Joel Chandler Harris' history in his hometown. The meeting, more so an introduction, opened a line of communication between our two organizations.

Two years later, I found myself at a crossroads in my career. It was time for me to part with The Wren's Nest, but the friends I made along the way would stay for a lifetime. But what did I want to do next? I had already worked at two historical societies once as a Curator and then as a Director of Historic Resources, I served as the Executive Director of a historic house museum and launched my career a decade earlier at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. Beginning at a place where most people end, I did not know what I wanted to do next. What was my next goal?

Remembering back, I can't tell you if I called them or they called me, but I found myself again speaking with the Georgia Writers Museum. This time, with a new President of the Board, discussing their progress and he, as part of an all-volunteer organization, seeking advice about museums. After the conversation I found myself still unemployed but slightly less bored, as I agreed to facilitate their next strategic plan.

Concurrently, Georgia Writers Museum was also organizing a 75th Birthday Celebration for hometown author and Pulitzer Prize winner Alice Walker. The event was regaled as a success, and will be for years to come, and upon its conclusion the museum was also completing its strategic plan and wondering what was next for GWM.

Having worked well together on the planning phase (though not able to get tickets to the coveted Alice Walker event) I was asked to join the museum as their first Executive Director at the end of 2020. Very shortly after I joined, we learned that the success of our Birthday Celebration propelled Eatonton onto the Southern Literary Trail (SLT), a tri-state organization that supports writers' historic homes, sites, and museums while sharing ideas and resources, marketing, and exhibits with other members along the trail. In December 2020, GWM hosted our first traveling exhibit from the SLT, *Unframed Images: Photography from the Collection of P.H. Polk*. Following this exhibit's run, I was asked to serve on the Exhibits Committee for the Southern Literary Trail.

Going into a new year with a new organization in a new town, I was nominated to and accepted a seat in the 2021 Leadership Putnam class. This quickly introduced me to my new professional home and put me on the fast-track to meeting donors, partners, and community advocates. Grateful for the opportunity and its benefits but seeing how a forty-year program could be modernized, a classmate and I, both with experience in other Leadership organizations, helped revise the program which we now co-Chair.

In my first few months at GWM, meeting the community was (and remains) as vital as researching the authors we exhibit and host. While GWM initially highlighted only three local authors (Joel Chandler Harris, Alice Walker, and Flannery O'Connor), we soon learned that six more Hall of Fame Writers lived, worked, and/or wrote within 30 miles of the museum. While we can now speak more fluently about these nine authors, there are over 70 writers in the Hall of Fame. We speak about writers rather than authors, to include, for example, songwriters such as Johnny Mercer who I first encountered through his archival collection at the Georgia State University Library's Special Collections, where I've served as a founding member of the Board of Advocates since 2018.

Learning more about historic and contemporary writers, I worked with GWM's volunteers to upgrade their signature program: Meet the Author. Formerly a book talk, now an experience, guests are invited for example: to taste whiskey and learn about the wild west, meet the first African American graduate of UGA who's memoir discusses her degree in music education while our local children's chorus performs in her honor, or tour the state mental health hospital campus while deciphering fact from fiction in our June novel (tour approval pending).

Experiential programming is also bringing two authors to the table, quite literally, for discussions on race, culture, and community in our first Junior Board of Directors capstone project this March 2022. Drawing on my experience as an Advisory Committee Member for Youth Leadership Sandy Springs (2016-Present), in which we strive to develop leadership qualities for high school students, a group of volunteers and I are stewarding our Junior Board through the process of selecting and hosting a Meet the Author (GWM's signature program) for students by students.

I am excited about the potential of the Georgia Writers Museum and working with the Board of Directors to create an engaging and sustainable museum. The Georgia Writers Museum was founded in 2014, and until last year was all-volunteer led. Their Board and volunteers took on a monumental feat to launch a new museum and have been operating it for the last six years. In 2021, I was asked to join the museum as their first Executive Director.

Like any board – or any family – we have our challenges, but I am continually impressed by this group's willingness to take on new projects, advocate for the museum, and support me in all my roles and “other duties as assigned.” With their support, I can take on responsibility outside my home organization and assist in a variety of roles in the non-profit arena.

## New Board Bios



## Rebecca Bush

Rebecca Bush is Curator of History and Exhibitions Manager at the Columbus Museum. A partial list of her projects in Columbus includes exhibitions on the Jewish heritage of the Chattahoochee Valley, women's suffrage in Georgia, the local Civil Rights Movement, and Southern Gothic author Carson McCullers.

Before rejoining the GAM board as Vice President this year, Rebecca served as the GAM newsletter chair from 2017 to 2021 and led the Host Committee for 2020's joint conference with the Alabama Museums Association. She is a co-editor and contributing author to *Art and Public History: Approaches, Opportunities, and Challenges*, and her research has been published in *Winterthur Portfolio* and *The Public Historian*.

Rebecca serves on the Southeastern Museums Conference Program Committee and as an Affiliate Editor for *History@Work*, the blog of the National Council on Public History. Prior to arriving in Columbus in 2011, Rebecca worked with house museums at Historic Columbia in South Carolina. She earned a BA in History from Kansas State University and an MA in Public History from the University of South Carolina. Rebecca enjoys traveling, reading, making music in the Bob Barr Community Band and Edgewood Presbyterian Church choir, and spoiling her cat, Sylvie.



## Andrea Miskewicz

Andrea Miskewicz is the Education Manager at the Museum of History and Holocaust Education (MHHE) at Kennesaw State University. She has been at the MHHE for nearly six years and during her tenure she has worked to help grow the education program and the reach of the museum. As part of that growth, she has maintained and developed partnerships/projects with organizations such as the Breman Museum, the Bartow History Museum, CAF Airbase Georgia, Yad Vashem, the National World II Museum, and more.

Prior to her work at the MHHE, she taught middle school in Gwinnett County, but transitioned to museum education after several years in the classroom. She has never looked back. Andrea discovered her love of museum education in college when she took a part-time job at the Pabst Mansion in Milwaukee working with Scout groups, so her career move into museum education was a natural fit.

Andrea earned a BA in History and Education from Marquette University, an MHP from Georgia State, and her EDS in History Education from Kennesaw State. She is also pursuing her doctorate and is focusing her research on museum-led professional development for teachers. In addition to being a wife and mom of a toddler, Andrea is an avid reader and a brewery enthusiast.

Andrea is thrilled to serve on the GAM Board and looks forward to future conferences, events, and working with many wonderful institutions in our state!



Ashleigh Oatts has been the Education Coordinator at the T.R.R. Cobb House in Athens (part of the Watson-Brown Foundation) since August 2015. Prior to moving to Georgia, she worked with several museums in Knoxville, TN, including the East Tennessee History Center and some of the Historic House Museums of Knoxville. She received her BA from Maryville College and her MA from Middle Tennessee State University.

Ashleigh is currently working on creating an exhibit about the enslaved peoples who were connected to the Cobb House and a website that shows the primary sources that will be utilized for that exhibit. She is also a proud dog mom of Patrick Henry (aka "Henry"), who works as the GAM Award-winning Social Media Associate for the Cobb House.

Along with being on the GAM Board, Ashleigh also serves on the Small Museums Administrators Committee Professional Network board for AAM and is on SEMC's Program Committee and an officer for their Historic House Museum Affinity Group (HHMAG).



**Ashleigh Oatts**

## New & Renewing Members

### Institutional

CAF Airbase Georgia  
 Chipley Historical Center  
 Colquitt County Arts Center  
 Elberta Depot Heritage Center  
 Georgia Museum of Art  
 Georgia Southern University  
 Museum  
 Hickory Hill  
 Lowndes County Historical Society  
 Museum of Arts & Sciences  
 Popes Museum  
 Purpose Possible  
 Riggs Ward Design  
 TRR Cobb Museum

### Sponsor

dmdg2  
 Georgia Humanities Council  
 Georgia Public Library Service  
 MBA Design & Display Products  
 Northeast Document Conservation  
 Center  
 Southern Custom Exhibits  
 Southeastern Museums Conference  
 University of Georgia Press

### Individual/Student

Andrew Bramlett  
 Lewis P. Bramlett  
 Rebecca Bush  
 Jamie Bynum  
 Donald O. Davis  
 Connie Fritz  
 Brad Hawkins  
 Tyler Kemary  
 Barbara Orsolits  
 Michael Scott  
 Margaret Sommer  
 Brent Ward  
 Karisa Zdanky



website: [gamg.org](http://gamg.org)



Instagram: [@gamuseums](https://www.instagram.com/gamuseums)



Facebook: [gamuseums](https://www.facebook.com/gamuseums)



LinkedIn: [georgia-association-of-museums](https://www.linkedin.com/company/georgia-association-of-museums)



CURRENT GAM BOARD: MARCY BREFFLE, ANDREA MISKEWICZ, POLLY HUFF | REBECCA BUSH, MICHELE RODGERS (ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR), HARVEE WHITE | EPHRAIM ROTTER, ASHLEIGH OATTS (WITH HENRY), MICHAEL LACHOWSKI | MELISSA SWINDELL, KARIN JOHNSTON DALTON