



EST. 1979

# EAST POINT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## FALL 2013

### Origin of Norman Berry Drive

East Point developed as a City divided east and west by the railroad tracks. As the City grew, getting back and forth across the tracks safely became a challenge, especially, after the widespread ownership of automobiles. With the Central of Georgia's Industrial Yard, located on the City's northeast boundary, where the freight trains were assembled – the traffic problem intensified when forming trains extended below the intersection of Cleveland Avenue, blocking all crossing for lengthy times, the need for an underground pass was discussed for many years. As early as 1938 plans were formulated by the County funding evaporated before they could be carried out.

It was not until the mid 1950s when a traffic study identified the need as critical that the underpass again became a priority item. In February 1958, a joint city-county hearing was held to discuss the long-awaited Spring Avenue railroad underpass. The \$1,500,000.00 project was funded through county bonds but carried out by the East Point Public Works Department under the supervision of Wayne Moore. Final approval had to come from the Central of Georgia Railroad which gave sanction only after an agreement that their crews be allowed to construct the bridge portion of the project.

Under construction for over two years, the Spring Avenue underpass and extension was not completed and opened until August 1961. The 1.3 mile east-west traffic artery began on



Headland Drive at Lumpkin Street and extended under Main Street and the railroad tracks to connect with East Cleveland Avenue. Entrance/Exit ramps were located at Cheney Street and Connally Drive. It was the City's largest single construction project and, before completion, the cost had almost doubled – \$2,398,545.67!

Robert Norman Berry, for whom the street is named, moved to East Point in November 1929, where he became a substitute mail carrier in the East Point Post Office and attended night school at Georgia Tech.

Mr. Berry continued with the Post Office and came up through the ranks from letter carrier to clerk. In 1939, he was named Assistant Postmaster and continued in that post until 1952 when he was named acting Postmaster upon the retirement of A. W. Etheridge. With the appointment of Scott Walters, Sr. as Postmaster in 1955, Mr. Berry returned to Assistant Postmaster and served until his death in 1960. A tireless civic worker, Berry had been instrumental in the 1947 re-organization of the East Point Chamber of Commerce, serving as its first Secretary-Manager and then as President. He also served on the Library Board, the Speakers Club, First Baptist Church, the Inter-City Civitan and the Russell High P.T.A. An active and ardent supporter of East Point during the years of incredible growth, Norman Berry's leadership came to an end on October 14, 1960 when he died of a heart attack at age 54.

A special Committee of City Council had been appointed to select a name for the underpass connector road then under construction. The Committee recommended the name of Robert Norman Berry and it was unanimously adopted, honoring the memory of a community leader who had, through the years, demonstrated unfailing devotion for his adopted City.

During these intervening years, Norman Berry Drive has been

Free to the public, but space is limited

RSVP to 404-767-4656 or to the event on our East Point Historical Society Facebook page

**How Many Stories Does Your House Have?**

Beverages and snacks provided

**A Building History Workshop** Saturday, October 26 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m.  
East Point Historical Society  
1685 Norman Berry Drive, East Point, GA 30344

Do you want to learn more about the history of your house or building? Are you curious about who lived in your house or what businesses operated in your building? Learn about the various resources available for uncovering building histories at the East Point Historical Society as well as other local and online resources.

Guest speaker Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., recipient of the Georgia Historical Society's John Macpherson Berrien Award for Lifetime Achievement

extended, first southeast to Martin Street and now to Virginia Avenue with a tie to the Airport Circumference road. It is now one of the most heavily traveled streets in East Point, offering safe and efficient cross-town travel. It is now the address of the East Point Historical Society and we feel that we have benefited from the greater visibility of this location. Norman Berry's widow, Eunice Berry Thompson, is a member of our Society.

– Anne Larcom  
Reprinted from November 19, 1989  
East Point Historical Society Newsletter



Anne Larcom, a long-time supporter of the East Point Historical Society and a former East Point resident, died July 18, 2013. With degrees in art history and historic preservation, Anne contributed much to documenting the history of East Point and to encouraging the preservation of its historic places.

Among her many special projects was the "Centennial Chronology of East Point History, 1887 - 1987," a detailed timeline beginning with East Point earliest settlement and was based on her research of the Historical Society's extensive collections, City Council minutes, private and public libraries and oral histories.

Thank you, Anne!

## East Washington Neighborhood

The East Washington Neighborhood (EWN) is one of the oldest neighborhoods in East Point. There is an enormous amount of history in East Washington.

The boundary lines for the EWN are East and West Cleveland Avenue from Main Street to Sylvan Road and south to Central Avenue.

There were other communities in the EWN known as Jungle Foot, Grabill, Oil Mill Road and the Montel Village Community. The Grabill community is where one of the oldest churches is located. Union Baptist Church, located on East Washington Avenue, was founded in 1866. The church celebrated 146 years on October 28, 2012.

Martin Luther King Sr., who was known as Daddy King and was the father of Martin Luther King Jr., accepted the call to pastor the church in 1918 and served until the early 1930s leaving to become the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Ga. Other pastors who have served at Union Baptist Church include Reverend C.L. Daugherty and Reverend B.B. Carter. The church is pastored today by Reverend Larry Banks.

The EWN has contributed more than a few major players to the world-at-large and the world of sports. EWN was the birthplace of two famous athletes: John Davis Milner, a professional baseball player who was awarded an outstanding award for his service with the New York Mets (1971 to 1982); also, Donald Adama, who played professional basketball with the Detroit Pistons.

The first black funeral home was L. Sims Funeral Home and was located on Holcomb Avenue. The second oldest was organized March 31, 1938 on Bayard Street. The building that housed Walker's Funeral Home is still standing. It is the oldest building in the EWN. The present funeral home in this community is the Gus Thornhill Funeral Home.

Because of the industries located in the East Washington Neighborhood, the City of East Point became the eighth largest Industrial city. These industries included: Piedmont Cotton Mill, Henry Chaney Cotton Mill, the steel plant, the Thread Shop, Hercules Power Co. and Allied Chemical Co., still located in the same spot on Central Avenue.

There are many new businesses that have been built on many historical properties. A few examples: (1) Newell Industrial set up business on the old cotton mill property, (2) Montel Home Public Housing and the South Fulton Medical Center were built where the old Grabill community was, and which was also the original location of the Union Baptist Church. The East Point Elementary School as well as East Point High School later became South Fulton High School. Black students were bused to the East Point High School from as far south as Palmetto, Fairburn and Union City.

A lesser known point of interest in EWN is the formation of the Flint River which begins near Willingham Drive and Tri-Cities Plaza. The Flint flows south into the Gulf of Mexico.

EWN was proudly chosen to be a makeover community through the Federal Urban Weed and Seed Program and the Urban Renewal program.

This program made the EWN an even better community.

– Charles Barlow, EPHS Board Member

## Visit Us Online ...

The EPHS is enjoying a thriving online presence. We now have over 600 members on Facebook! Our online community shares stories and photos and helps reconnect people.

Please visit our official website at [www.eastpointths.org](http://www.eastpointths.org) and follow the link to our Facebook page.



## ... or In-Person!

Learn more about East Point history and see first hand the collection of artifacts, photographs, maps and records that further illustrate East Point's history.

We are located at 1685 Norman Berry Drive, East Point, GA. Our phone number is 404-767-4656.

Our hours are as follow:  
Thursday, 1 p.m.-4 p.m.  
Saturday, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.



# EAST POINT CENTENNIAL QUILT

## A History Lesson in Needlework

Parts Four and Five: Education and Commerce

In 1987, members of the East Point Woman's Club stitched together a quilt to commemorate East Point's Centennial. Each of the 49 squares helps tell the story of East Point's history. The quilt is on display at the East Point Historical Society. Here are the fourth and fifth parts in a series of East Point history lessons, as reflected in a sampling of the quilt's squares.

**PART FOUR, EDUCATION:** Providing educational facilities and learning opportunities has been a part of East Point history since its very beginnings.

### Schoolhouse

In 1845 at the Connally Plantation, a private school was established and operated there until 1867. In 1891, public schools were created and in 1895 Central School was built on the site of the current City Hall. In 1915, three new elementary schools were authorized; Harris Street and Church Street for white children and Randall Street for African American children, who up to this time, received most of their education in churches.

### National Archives

The National Archives was established in 1934 to centralize federal government record keeping. The building that housed the Southeast records center was built in 1955 in East Point's Colonial Hills neighborhood.

### Atlanta Christian College

Founded by Judge Thomas Hathcock and his wife Nora Head Hathcock in 1937, the college is located on farmland donated by Mrs. Hathcock. In 2011, the name was changed to Point University and the main campus moved to West Point, GA.

### Public Library

Completing the block of city buildings in downtown East Point, the East Point Public Library was dedicated in 1939. The Federal Revival style structure was constructed as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (FEAPW) in 1939. This library served East Point residents until the mid-1990s when it merged with the Atlanta Fulton County system. William H. Howell was the first librarian and remained in that position until his retirement in 1974.

**PART FIVE, COMMERCE:** Reflecting our growing and diverse economy, commerce and trade flourished in East Point throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

### Telephones

East Point's first telephone was installed in 1884 at the Furman Farm Improvement plant. This was East Point's first industry, started in 1880. In 1900, Southern Bell granted a telephone franchise for the East Point vicinity.



# EAST POINT CENTENNIAL QUILT

## PART FIVE, COMMERCE (Continued)

### Newspapers

Reflecting East Point's agrarian-based industries, The Plow Boy was first published in 1886 to influence national and state farm policies. In the early 1900s, the East Point News (later the South Fulton News Herald) was adopted as the official newspaper for the city and the Suburban Reporter began as a weekly publication. In 1967, the Southside Sun issued its first edition.

### Trolley

In 1899 Georgia Railway and Power Co. (now Georgia Power Company) sought to extend its electric street car line from Atlanta to East Point. Service began in 1901 with a 5 cent fare. In 1937, overhead lines for trackless trolleys were installed. Bus service was eventually implemented and is now incorporated into MARTA's regional rapid rail and bus system.

### Hearse

A.C. Hemperley & Sons Funeral Home was founded in East Point in 1904 and Howard L. Carmichael & Sons relocated their business to East Point in 1922. In 2000 these two family owned and operated businesses merged. A location still exists on East Point Street. Gus Thornhill, East Point's first African American police officer in 1965, now operates his funeral home in East Point's East Washington neighborhood. As a child he washed hearses for the Walker Funeral Home, East Point's second oldest funeral home that first served the black community in 1938.

### Ford

The Ford Motor Company produced the original Model A in 1903. By 1909, the "model year" designation was in effect for the Model T, considered the first affordable automobile that made transportation more accessible throughout America. A Ford dealership was established in East Point in 1925, thought to be East Point's first automobile dealership.

### Z

J. N. Zellner and Son Transfer Company operated its family-based trucking company from the 1930s until well into the 1980s at its location near East Point's railroad industrial complex. J.N. Zellner was also the freight agent at the Central of Georgia depot for many years.

### South Fulton Hospital

As early as 1955, plans were underway for establishing a hospital to serve the tri-cities area. Over \$1,250,000 was raised through individual and business contributions to qualify for a Hill-Burton grant, authorized in 1946 for improving hospital services nationwide. It began operation in 1963 and merged with the Atlanta Medical Center in 2013, as the South Campus. The hospital was built on the site of Union Baptist Church, a Gothic-inspired structure built there in 1884. Union Baptist is East Point's oldest African American congregation, dating back to 1866. Dr. Martin Luther King, Sr. (Daddy King) served this congregation in 1918 as he was beginning his ministerial career.

– Carole Griffith, EPHS Volunteer





## History of Connally Nature Park

Before the Creek Indians sold their land in 1821, the area now in the City of East Point was wild forests. By the end of that year, Georgia had five new counties, and most of those were parceled out via the land lottery in 202.5-acre homesteads. The 27 acres of Connally Nature Park (Park) were in Henry County until 1822 when DeKalb County was formed from parts of Henry, Gwinnett and Fayette counties. David Connally and his two brothers Abner and Christopher Columbus Connally bought land in the western part of that county.

Soon, much of the forests were stripped and plowed to make David's plantation. Because this was a much different era, slaves were among those who constructed buildings and a grist mill on another branch of Utoy Creek, harvested wheat and other crops. Fulton County was established in 1853 out of DeKalb. East Point became a city in 1887. From fields, the land became developments for houses and some to forest again. The Mulberry Court entrance area to the Park saw houses built and removed.

In 1974, "core samples of trees taken by Emory professors indicate white oaks to be over 250 years of age"—Chronology of the Thomas W. Connally Nature Park. Hence the age is now approaching 300. The heirs were fed up with the city water works encroaching on the property by 1991, and eventually sold it to the city. The very next year, the city was prepared to clear cut and put in ball fields, but didn't.

In 1998, Fulton County Board of Education (FCBE) was blocked in a search for school site. They turned to East Point, which sells Park to them. Residents are upset—some dislike the idea of yelling kids across the street, while others want to keep property as a park.

The next year, sees the battle heat up. Sierra Club, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeepers, and other groups come in to support keeping it Park. FCBE asks Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) for permit to put the Utoy Creek branch underground. There are demonstrations and court dates, and with complaints ringing in their ears, the FCBE agreed to move the school footprint westward across Mulberry Street so stream buffer would not be affected (this was a separate buy and afterwards, the new purchaser

took down five houses to build the Sheltering Arms Early Education complex).

In January 2000, new members joined city council with some supportive of the Park. But it was a long year of citizen and court actions.

Sierra Club filing suit against the EPD and FCBE definitely helped save the trees and the plant communities. The school plan would have saved up to seven of the 25+ old oaks. Even if they saved those trees, can you image keeping 500 kids from trampling around the trees and compressing the soil? Also, would the area around the trees have been large enough to support the needs of the trees or would it have just been a slow death?

In the 13 years since the major battles, we have seen the death of the huge white oak near the entrance to the forest due to tractor work done at the very beginning clipping the roots. Invasive plants are running wild, with English ivy running up trees, and covering wide areas of the forest floor killing native plants. Someone has a trash camp not far from Connally Drive. However, there are groups willing to help.

Because the winter had periods of cold, warm, then cold again – plants were later this year than last. Pink ladyslippers weren't in bloom during the first week in April. However, there were many surprises for the groups that hiked later in April. Several ladyslippers were in more areas than before. There were more than a half dozen fern species and both Solomon seal and Solomon plume in good display.

– D. Gordon Draves, EPHSVP

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*Pink Ladyslipper*

## 2013 EPHS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

I/we would like to renew my/our annual membership at the following membership level and help bring East Point's past to the present for the benefit of the future:

- Single, \$10
- Family, \$15
- Corporate, \$50
- Donation of any amount gratefully accepted, \$\_\_\_\_\_

**EPHS is a nonprofit organization that depends on your membership and generosity in order to operate.  
We welcome your contribution whether it be your time or monetary donation.**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS WITH YOUR CHECK:

East Point Historical Society  
P.O. Box 90675  
East Point, Georgia 30364-0675

OR VISIT US IN PERSON:

We are located at 1685 Norman Berry Drive, East Point, GA. Our phone number is 404-767-4656.

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