

Winter 20 22

The LEGACY

A Publication of Watson-Brown Foundation, Inc.

Trees COMPANY

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

MADE RUNNER

GOODRUM HOUSE

Cherry ON TOP

SAVING CHERRY GROVE



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OUR MISSION

The Watson-Brown Foundation, through creativity, diligence and financial support, labors to improve education in the American South by funding its schools and students, preserving its history, encouraging responsible scholarship and promoting the memory and values of our spiritual founders.

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CAMPUS NOTES



Watson-Brown Scholars in Action



Nayha Hussain, Sophomore, Clemson University: The Watson-Brown Foundation gives me the flexibility to pursue my passion! I've gotten to take fun classes like Intro to Food Sci! I went to Pakistan for the first time in over 15 years! I was on the show MasterChef! Hardest part about college is time management and balancing social life.

Gabriel Brunkow-Schnell, Sophomore, Augusta University: During my freshman year of college at Augusta University, I joined new activities, excelled in my classes—despite COVID-19 restrictions—volunteered and worked for the Board of Elections office, and made new friends along the way. The group that I was most involved with at Augusta University was the CRU organization for Christian young adults. I joined in the fall and was able to meet weekly with several young men who shared my interest in Christian studies. I was very pleased that the pastor of my local church was hosting the CRU meetings for Augusta University, because this allowed a direct connection between my school life on campus and my religious life outside of my studies. Through CRU I met plenty of new friends, some of which share my major and academic interests. I was also introduced to the few fraternities at Augusta University by a friend I met at CRU. This led to me meeting a wide variety of other students that attend my university and allowed me to gain

insight from upperclassmen on what Augusta University was like for them.

Outside of the school environment, I became involved this school year in working for the Board of Elections by counting absentee ballots for the Presidential and Senate races. This time in my life was very important to me because it tied my political interests into work experience, which I had been lacking prior. I am very glad that I was able to take the opportunity to focus on my job counting absentee ballots for these elections and take part in helping all votes count. This meant so much to me, because I know many people were not able to leave their homes during times where COVID-19 fears and risks were high. I also volunteered several hours during this time period for the Get Out and Vote movement. I spent lots of time during the peak of the elections putting up signs for campaign candidates and spreading the word for all people to vote. I never knew just how much effort and communication was put into this movement until I finally became involved.

Joining the tennis program at my local tennis center has become my favorite activity of the year. During this school year, I picked up tennis, a sport that I discovered my passion for in high school. I played for my high school team during my senior year in high school; however, COVID-19 restrictions shortened the season dramatically. Especially in my first semester at Augusta University, I felt as though I needed to find my place in life and was missing a certain hobby or passion. I came to realize that tennis was the answer and joined adult tennis lessons at my local tennis center. I now play regularly with other young adults who share



GABRIEL BRUNKOW-SCHNELL



ANGUS MCCORD

my love for the sport. It has worked as a great way to destress, specifically during exam times, and has made me feel more connected with people my age.

In the classroom and online, I have had a wonderful learning experience at Augusta University thus far. All of my professors have been very accessible and helpful communicating with me. Not only were my professors a great part of my experience this year, but I was also surprised at how welcoming many of my fellow classmates were. In my in-person classes, my professors did a great job keeping students engaged and connected to one another to create a lively classroom. I came to know many of the other students well and felt right at home with the crowds who were a part of my learning journey. I participated in many group projects, speeches, and open discussions which strongly helped with my public speaking anxiety. I feel like a much braver and more outgoing person, in general, now because of how I've grown from my classwork. I was also able to maintain a 3.6 GPA for the year and an astounding 4.0 GPA for my second semester at Augusta University, which made me very proud to be an Augusta University Jaguar. I also made the Dean's List and Honors Program at Augusta University for both semesters. I feel as though I genuinely took away lots of information from my classes that will be helpful in my future career and college experience.

Angus McCord, Senior, College of Charleston: This past year has been very formative for me. I have taken a lot of time to look deeper into myself and ask what I really

want in life. I am getting to know myself better, and I can better understand how the decisions I make will impact my well-being. I have had a lot of growth this year. And much of this growth has been in the midst of hardships, including COVID and deeply saddening death. I feel like the growth that I have experienced in the midst of hardships has made me a much fuller human and much more able to adapt to stress. I have been really enjoying my classes, and I will always be extremely grateful for the Watson-Brown Foundation for allowing me to fuel my love of learning.

I have also been really trying to engage with self-growth outside of academia. One of the biggest achievements this past year was building a wetland garden for the college campus. In the fall, I designed a pond to be fed by rainwater off of the roofs of the office buildings. With the help of volunteers, I dug out an area for the pond and I have spent this past year planting native plants in the wetland area. It has been a very important project of mine, and I devote a lot of my energy to making the pond look nice. It's already increasing the insect life on campus, providing homes and food for lots of dragonflies and butterflies.

James Qu, Sophomore, Duke University: I have had a great first-year experience at Duke University. Online classes and restrictions on events and procedures around the Duke campus due to the ongoing COVID pandemic provided some struggles in adapting to living on campus and learning in general. However, I was still able to meet many fresh new faces and build great friendships and community with the people at Duke. I also got to see



JAMES QU



some of the many great buildings and attractions at Duke, such as the Duke Chapel, the Duke Pond, etc.

Since tennis has been a huge part of my life, I was also eager to go out and play tennis on the courts located right next to my dorm on campus. However, it was closed for most of the year. When it opened again in the spring of 2021, I was able to meet many great players and a huge tennis community here at Duke, as well. While it was a little unfortunate that I and many other college freshmen did not get the full first-year college experience due to the coronavirus, I still enjoyed my time greatly at Duke. I am really pleased with the community and environment at Duke and I am really excited for what Duke has to offer next year. Go, Blue Devils!!!

Mileah Meyer, Junior, Furman University: This semester has been the hardest one I have faced to date. After declaring my biology major, the difficulty of my classes picked up immensely. In addition, due to COVID-19 protocols, I found myself feeling more alone than I had in a long time. I was very fortunate to live with my best friend this semester, which helped me to feel less alone on days when I needed my support system the most. This semester, I learned that I can overcome any course, and my career as a Furman student will continue. I have always been a person who stressed over every test score, every tenth of a point. In some ways, I still do, but in others,



I have learned to accept that my grades will not be perfect every semester, especially amidst the trying circumstance of this semester. I was able to complete my finals and, afterwards, had an internship for the summer at the coroner's office, which has been very rewarding. While some days are tragic, I am finally doing something I have felt called to do for my entire life. I hope that this is only the start to my career in forensic science.

Ann Yang, Senior, Harvard College: When I started applying for college four years ago, the idea of going to school online never entered my mind. Spending junior year online at Harvard was challenging but nonetheless rewarding. While I may not have had what is thought of as the typical college experience, I have been able to seek out new and exciting opportunities this year that I otherwise would not have even thought of pursuing. The most exciting of these opportunities is a computational biology project on discovering conserved structural RNAs in puffer fish. My daily tasks make use of coding in Python, learning the software developed by the research group, and using the university's research computing resources. Although I had little experience with these tasks before this project, I wanted to conduct scientific research in the remote setting, and this project would allow me to develop a meaningful skill set regardless of where I was located. I started this project in January 2021 and will continue working on it over the summer. After summer, I hope to write an honor's thesis on this project during my senior year.

Gabrielle Macrina, Senior, Temple University: My semester was entirely virtual again; however, I managed to make the most of it and stay as involved on Temple's campus as I could. I served on the executive board for Temple's student-run public relations firm, PRowl Public Relations. In my position as the director of PR for the firm, I managed our digital presence and led many different external and internal communications initiatives. I love being a part of PRowl because the atmosphere of the firm is extremely motivating and encouraging. PRowl allows me to develop my skills as a PR professional, while also making connections with other students in the media and communication school at Temple. In addition to PRowl, I am also a member of Temple's chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). This past semester, we were able to have many different guest speakers and presentations given the accessibility of meeting through Zoom. My favorite guest speaker from this semester was when the director of PR and communications at Ben & Jerry's, Sean Greenwood, spoke to us about corporate social responsibility initiatives and how he developed





JULIANNE JONES

Ben & Jerry's voice for progressive change.

As a sister of the Epsilon Phi chapter of Tri Delta, I participated in virtual fundraising events for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. I also participated in leadership workshops and networking events hosted by Tri Delta.

I was inducted into Temple's chapter of Lambda Pi Eta, the Communication Studies Honor Society affiliated with the National Communication Association. Lambda Pi Eta recognizes the top three percent of the Communication Studies major and membership is by invitation only. I also began the summer internship hunt at the beginning of the semester. I applied for and was selected for a public relations and content development internship position with Flackable, an award-winning PR Agency based in Philadelphia. Flackable works with clients in the financial and professional services industries, and I am excited to gain more PR experience at such a unique and innovative agency.

Finally, despite the challenges of online classes, I am very proud to have been selected for the Klein College of Media and Communication's Dean's List for the sixth consecutive semester. My involvement on campus and ability to pursue outside opportunities would not be possible without the support of the Watson-Brown Foundation scholarship!

Julianne Jones, Senior, University of Georgia: Spring of 2021 has been a wild ride, from power outages and medical issues to picking up another major and a minor and all the wonderful things in between. This past semester had its up and downs but, in the end, it was a good one. I have lived with my wonderful roommates for almost two years now and they're still my best friends. I joined UGA Miracle and experienced my first Dance Marathon with our amazing families. I got my first concussion and kidney infection this semester; I am better now, no worries. I made some of the best grades I have ever made this semester, which has officially brought my GPA high enough to apply to medical schools. I got to meet so many new people through Miracle and make bonds that will last. I received the wonderful news that I am headed to Rock Eagle 4-H center to be a camp counselor for the 2021 summer. This is a huge milestone for Georgia 4-H and all of our campers; after 2020 these kids need an escape to camp. We will be implementing CDC guidelines and ensure the strictest safety measures; summer camp is back. Final exams started off with power outages all over Athens, but we made it. I had a hard semester fall of 2020 with medical issues, but it has brought me picking up an entomology major and a biology minor. I will be staying one extra semester now to be able to finish both degrees, but it means a little more time in

the best place away from home and an extra season of football. Go, Dawgs!

Grant Butler, Senior, University of South Carolina Aiken: This semester was a challenge. I learned that, while nursing school may be challenging, I can do this. I was awarded the Clinical Excellence Award for my clinical group and saw a half a dozen births while in clinical this semester.



GRANT BUTLER

What I am most proud of is that I made a 90 on my final exam in pharmacology! Overall, this has been a great semester that I felt has changed me for the better. Thank you so much!



AVERY HOLLAND

Avery Holland, Junior, University of South Carolina Columbia: This entire school year, I have been working with the softball team here at South Carolina, and it has been a huge adjustment but so worth it. I have developed lifelong friendships, great work ethic, and a huge amount of confidence in myself. I will be interning with the management and sales training program of Sherwin-Williams this summer, as well. Thank you for all that you do for us scholars!

Julia McElhinny, Senior, Wake Forest University: This school year was definitely one for the record books! Because of COVID, “normal” was not in my vocabulary. I moved back into Wake Forest in August 2020 not knowing how long we would be able to stay on campus and nervous about the idea of mostly learning through a computer screen. Things were different, but my suite-mates and I made the most of the semester and got to do more exploring in Winston-Salem. I was originally planning to study abroad this past spring semester in South America, but that was obviously impossible. I was sad that I couldn’t do that, but I had a great experience on campus. One of the highlights of my spring semester was adapting an environmental education program to a virtual platform through my internship with the Wake Forest Office of Sustainability and getting to teach almost 1,500 seventh-grade students through Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Technology issues aside, I learned a lot and really enjoyed interacting with students in any way that we could!

This summer, I was supposed to be in Monterey, California, but I am now working remotely from home with the same team from NOAA Fisheries to understand patterns in marine biodiversity off the California coast. I also will be traveling to Montana with my research lab at Wake Forest for wildlife research using drones, which is something that I never thought I would be doing this summer.



JULIA MCELHINNY



DANNY THOMAS



Alumni Spotlight

BY SHANNON FRIEDMANN HATCH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICOLE MELE



If a tree falls in the forest in Connecticut, chances are that Danny Thomas knows. Since 2019, he's worked in forestry in the state, although the hardwood trees of New England are a departure from his own roots in South Carolina. A forestry graduate of Clemson University, Danny humbly admits he "has a lot of experience in the woods." Timber cruising, firefighting, consulting, land management—there's much more to forestry than meets the eye. In fact, to turn an idiom on its head, in order to see the forest, you must look at the trees. It's no surprise, then, that Danny's story is tied to one and begins in a hammock on the banks of the Savannah River.

Danny grew up in North Augusta, South Carolina, a mid-size town by Palmetto State standards that's snuggled up to the watery river state line. You could find him most days outdoors, using the railway-turned-trail near his parents' backyard as a personal boulevard to adventure. Saturdays held the possibility of waking up at dawn and driving three hours to fish on the Chattooga River with his dad and older brother, car pulling in the driveway at dusk. It's no wonder then that Danny made Eagle Scout, installing mile markers on the same Greenway he once traveled as a child.



His path to forestry grew out of his love of the outdoors. “I wanted a career where I could work outside and make a good living,” he said. His studies at Clemson opened his eyes to the business of forest resource management, which can span work from national parks to lumber mills to desk jobs. Classes like dendrology gave names to each woody specimen he encountered and “summer camp” experiences timber cruising through properties taught him that, like people, a sample of trees can be measured and their data extrapolated to tell the story of the population. “Cruising timber is a lot like polling people, except trees don’t change their minds,” said Danny with a laugh.

While in college, and even in his career so far, Danny takes advantage of every opportunity that comes his way. “I’m like Jim Carey in *Yes Man*,” he said. “I want to experience as much as I possibly can. Not everything you need to know can be found in a book.” He studied invasive plant species in Indiana through a seven-week stint with the Purdue University Extension Service as an undergrad and set prescribed fires in Kings National Military Park, burning understory to

prevent wildfires. On internship in 2017, he joined the Georgia Forestry Commission as an intern, where he even once flew up in a small plane and scanned the loblolly needles below for the tell-tale browning of pine-beetle infestation. He learned to make maps and mark trees for cutting, bidding, and boundaries.

Currently, Danny is a forester at Connwood Forrester, Inc., the oldest forestry consulting firm in Connecticut, where he moved to be closer to family. If you must bloom where you’re planted, Danny has taken this relocation to New England as a chance to grow. He’s learning that approaches to land management vary from the Southeast to the Northeast, just as the species and growing times. The future of the field excites him, too. “There’s a new frontier coming where drones can measure the amount of carbon stored in a forest,” he said. Linked to this forward-thinking vision is his focus on sustainability. “I really care about the land and want to leave it as good, if not better, than how I found it,” he said. “We have a responsibility to manage our forests for our future. It’s our greatest renewable resource.”







1931 photo by Tebbs & Knell of the original needlepoint runner.



WHAT'S NEW? CARPETS & CURTAINS!



Goodrum House

BY BARBARA HYDE

With the pandemic stalling some of our progress these past two years, Goodrum House has had two outstanding projects waiting in the wings. The first, recreating the staircase carpet runners, was finally finished in October. It was an 18-month process, starting with contacting a family member who still retained the original carpet. After looking at the original runners and comparing them to a Tebbs & Knell 1931 photograph of the staircase along with a 1932 description in *Architecture* magazine where they were described as “made from a set of hangings in Old French needlepoint, very finely wrought in soft faded colors,” it was apparent that the carpet we had was not original to 1931.

While looking at later photographs taken in the mid-1940s, it became obvious that at some point prior to 1943, the original runners had probably worn over the years and May decided to recreate something quite like the original needlepoint design but

in a chenille carpet. We contacted Stark, a company who has a long history of recreating historic carpets, including the dining room Aubusson at Swan House, another Philip Trammell Shutze home, to help us decide the best way to proceed.

It was determined that while we couldn't recreate the chenille construction of the carpet, as the looms no longer exist, we could recreate the pattern, color and weight as an Axminster carpet. The process was started in June 2020, with Stark providing artwork and a “kibby” strike off, a sample for design, color and scale, but not construction. Luckily, we were able to provide the original 1940s carpet for color, design and size. After several strike offs to get the color exact, we went into production. By June 2021, it was ready to be shipped, finally arriving in the U.S. three months later.

In October, two installers spent a full day measuring, hand-sewing the borders to perfectly mitered corners, and tacking the carpet down to the treads. It's the perfect design and color to tie the dining



1931 Tebbs & Knell photograph of dining room chairs.

and living rooms together, both of which open into the entry hall through gracefully arched doorways.

The second project we've been working on is the dining room curtains. While there was no original fabric or trim to use for reference, we looked to the description in *Southern Architectural Review* magazine, which detailed the curtains as "antique white brocade with bright red glass curtains." The pattern was indiscernible in any photograph, so we decided to use an antique pattern produced by Gainsborough Silk Weaving Company in England in a white-on-white colorway in damask. Natalie Larson of Historic Textile Reproductions in Williamsburg, Virginia studied the photographs to determine the yardage and construction of the

curtains, as well as the ball fringe, which was procured from Samuel & Son in New York.

Thanks to a catastrophic dip in a puddle whilst in the care of U.S. Customs, the white damask had to be completely remade! It took almost a year to the day to manufacture, ship, and construct the fabric and curtains. Natalie and her husband, Bruce, spent a day at Goodrum House hanging the cornices, rods, and curtains, complete with a "floofing" from Natalie to get just the right pleat in line. The red "glass curtains," as they were referred to in the 1930s, or what we commonly refer to as "sheers," will be made and installed in spring 2022, along with the elaborate tieback tassels for each panel.



Original 1940s stair runner carpet.



Kiby strike off from Stark Carpet.



Bruce and Natalie Larson installing the dining room curtains.



White damask by Gainsborough Silk Weaving Co., Sudbury, UK.



A POCKET BOOK OF NAMES



T.R.R. Cobb House

BY SAMUEL N. THOMAS

Years ago, before “men’s purses” became some sort of new fad, well-educated men carried pocketbooks, or rather “pocket books.” Pocket books for men got started in the 1600s as a small bag, sack, or pouch with drawstrings to hold their coins. In the South, the pouch was generally referred to as a poke. By the 1700s, educated men carried a small leather folder in their poke in which they kept bills of sale, letters of credit, or other important papers. This evolved into the practice of carrying a small blank book in which to write down ideas, make notes, and record business transactions.

By the mid-nineteenth century, pocket books for men took on increased importance. Every businessman could be seen carrying his pocket book with sensitive legal papers, notes of credit, bills of sale and other records, some loose within the book and some on the pages within.

According to family tradition, when Tom Cobb was out on his rounds visiting businessmen in town soliciting funds for building the Lucy Cobb Institute, he carried a small book, a pocket book, with him in which he recorded prominent names and how much the individual was going to contribute to building the new school (in some cases without their knowledge).

Alerted by friends of the Georgia Museum of Art that a pocket book from Georgia was coming up at auction, we investigated. Although the auction item was simply listed as a “Slave Journal,” on the front page was written “Swift Creek” and “Bibb.” Our notice was immediate. This was all we needed. Pocket books are generally rather rare items

and come up at auction only occasionally. What made this one so desirable was that we could identify the original owner.

Swift Creek in Bibb County, Georgia was one of the main plantations that John B. Lamar managed for the Lamar and Cobb families in the 1850s. The item wasn’t a slave journal, it was a plantation record and not for just for one plantation as it turned out but several.

Ashleigh Oatts, our Education Coordinator, trekked up to New England to attend the auction on our behalf. After carefully bidding her time until the bidding started on that particular item, she set about with bulldog determination to obtain the prized pocket book.

Before Howell Cobb married Mary Ann Lamar of Milledgeville in 1835, the Lamar family refused to consent to the marriage unless an arrangement was worked out. After all, Mary Ann was the heir to part of a land fortune in Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. The family wanted to ensure that Mary Ann’s wealth would be safeguarded, especially since Howell had already lost one fortune. Therefore, the trustees of Zachariah, Mary Ann’s father, who died the year previous, insisted upon a premarital contract that kept her assets separate from Howell’s.

In Georgia alone, the Lamar holdings numbered a dozen or more properties spread out in six different counties across the state. An operation that widespread needed someone who knew how to manage it. John B. Lamar, Mary Ann’s brother, stepped into the position as manager. He was twenty-two years old.

In addition to Lamar family assets, John B. Lamar added Cobb family assets to manage when Howell and Mary Ann married. It was a management position in which he was imminently proficient.

By 1859, John B. Lamar consolidated the Lamar-Cobb holdings by selling off the Alabama and Florida properties and shrinking the Georgia holdings to seven very profitable plantations. The entire operation was managed from his home, known as the Bear's Den, in Macon.

With Howell concentrating in state and national politics, John B. also assumed the duties as Howell's and Mary Ann's personal representative, arranging for the building and then personally shopping in New York City for the furnishings of their new house on Hill Street. It was an association he continued until he was killed at Crampton's Gap in 1862, while standing beside Howell as his adjutant.

The pocket book that Ashleigh was able to retrieve for us, is just seven inches from top to bottom and four-and-five-eighths inches wide, but within the 164 pages are recorded the names of approximately seven hundred enslaved individuals living and working on the seven plantations in 1859. The names seem to be listed in family groupings – a potential windfall to African-American genealogy. Other notations within the pocket book include entries such as taxes paid and the amounts of cotton and woolen yardage each individual received for summer and winter clothing. There are also personal notations about a few of the enslaved themselves, such as, “Washington ... married Patsy Ann.”

We knew that some of the enslaved were moved between households in Athens, but movement among the Lamar-Cobb plantations was only speculated. In their recent book, *Seen/Unseen: Hidden Lives in a Community of Enslaved Georgians* (University of Georgia Press, 2021), three friends of the T.R.R. Cobb House – Christopher Lawton, Laura Nelson, and Randy Reid – reveal that John B. Lamar supervised the daily operations on each plantation through highly selected overseers. This emerging view into mid-nineteenth-century Southern management practices lays out a “proto-corporate management practice” where “each individual operation [is] functioning as part of a network along which people, supplies, and material moved so as to



Notes provide historical and even ancestral insight.

maximize production.” From the book:

“Administering the more than twenty thousand acres and hundreds of human beings his family owned led John B. Lamar to employ a style of management that was more scientific and corporate in its design than was practiced by many of his less-affluent peers. He, like some few other absentee owners of large-scale plantations, found it highly profitable to embrace a form of organization that foreshadowed the scientific management systems advocated by late-nineteenth-century industrialists. John B.’s organizational model created a network of vertically integrated plantations that ran on the free flow of massive amounts of written information and through the endless physical movement of resources and people between the family’s holdings. Each of the family’s plantations was both a self-sufficient enterprise and part of an interconnected network.”

Plantation records can be found in various repositories in the South, but few are found associated with prominent individuals that include a rich collection of materials still in existence such as business records, receipts, and personal correspondence. The puzzle slowly begins to emerge as more and more of the pieces fall into place.

We know that the largest of the plantations was Hurricane Plantation in Baldwin County. This plantation was burned by Sherman during his “March to the Sea” in 1864. The house was ransacked and plundered before being destroyed, and at least some items were transported North. This may be how this 1859 plantation record found itself in 2021 in an auction house in New England.

After some additional research and inquiries, it seems that our plantation record is not the only one. There is a second plantation record of John B. Lamar in inexistence. The second, as it turns out, is the plantation record for 1857 and it’s just down the street in the holdings of the Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library at the University of Georgia. So, now that we’ve identified an 1857 record and an 1859 record, it begs the question: Where is the 1858 record? Could it still out there? The search will continue for that missing piece. There is much to be gleaned from these resources and from deeper research dives into the Lamar-Cobb family records for many years to come.

All of this from a pocket book.



Cover of John B. Lamar’s pocket book from 1859.



SAVING CHERRY GROVE



Sticks & Stones

BY MICHELLE ZUPAN

In 1875 in Wilkes County, Georgia outside the city limits of Washington, land was acquired for a new Baptist Church: Cherry Grove. It was to be a daughter church of Springfield Baptist in Washington. Cherry Grove, like Springfield, would serve the newly emancipated Black residents of the area. The first church was just a brush arbor that was soon replaced by a log structure. Sadly, the building was destroyed in a wind storm after the turn of the century. It was replaced with a squat, rectangular sanctuary and steeple, typical of many rural Southern churches that echoed the eighteenth-century “meeting house.”

Around 1910, church members raised funds for a one-room building with a peaked roof to be constructed across the graveyard from the church; the Cherry Grove School was born. It was common at the time for schools serving Black children to be funded by church congregations. The County would pay the teacher’s salary and provide some older textbooks; members of the church and school families would provide funds for everything else from firewood to chalk. Cherry Grove served the Black children of Wilkes County until 1956.

As many as twenty-seven schools, including a Rosenwald School,

served the Black children of Wilkes County, but Cherry Grove is believed to be the only building remaining. Situated behind the church of the same name, backing up to the nearly forgotten Cohentown cemetery, the school fell into ruin and nearly suffered the same fate as the Log Airy and New Hope schools — demolition.

In 2015, Barrett Hansen, a former Wilkes County resident, established The Friends of Cherry Grove School and began a full-press preservation effort. In the ensuing years, the school was placed on the Georgia Trust’s Places in Peril list and was nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. Small donations began to roll in, followed by grant funds, and rehabilitation began in earnest.

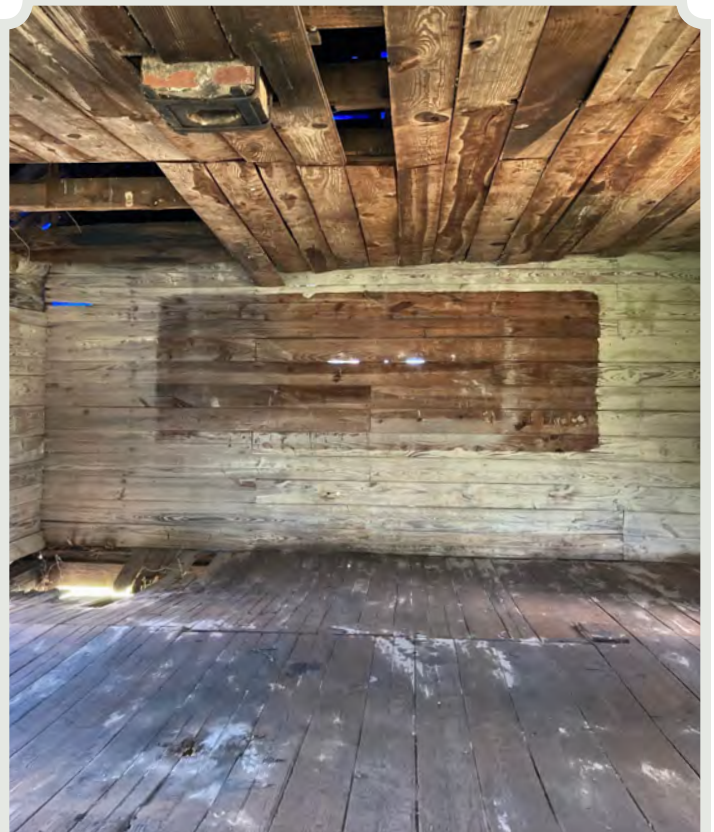
The Friends of Cherry Grove received a challenge grant from the Watson-Brown Junior Board in 2020. They asked for stabilization of the foundation piers and a roof replacement. The Junior Board requested that the west wall be stabilized first. With help from the Rayle EMC, the west wall was stabilized, followed by the piers and the roof. Cherry Grove is now secure from the elements! More work needs to be done to turn it into a community gathering place. A recent award of a Callahan Incentive Grant from the Georgia Trust will ensure it.



Grove Church about 1910.



Cherry Grove just prior to rehabilitation.



The ghost marks from the original blackboard are visible on the wall.



OUR FOUNDER

Walter J. Brown was a journalist and a broadcast pioneer who built and chaired what would become Spartan Communications, Inc., one of the larger privately held TV companies in the country.

Early in his career, Brown had an office in the White House when he served on the staff of Secretary of State James F. Byrnes. Brown's enduring love for politics was eclipsed only by his respect for Jimmy Byrnes. Inspired in part by Byrnes's philanthropy—which in 1948 established the James F. Byrnes Foundation—Brown created his own private Foundation in 1970. Named for Thomas E. Watson and J.J. Brown, the men to whom Brown attributed his success, the Watson-Brown Foundation today continues to ensure that hundreds of deserving students are provided the opportunity to excel at the college of their choice.