



COASTAL GEORGIA
**HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

NEWSLETTER

The mission of the Society is to connect people to Coastal Georgia's dynamic history through the stories we share and the collections we preserve.

Spring Program

“From Empire to Revolution: Sir James Wright and the Price of Loyalty in Georgia”

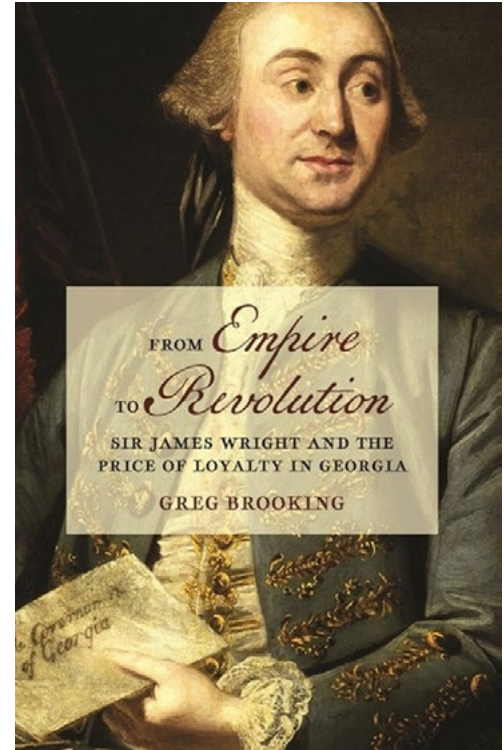
On Thursday, March 20, at 6 p.m., Greg Brooking, Ph.D., will present the Society's Spring Program, based on his book *From Empire to Revolution: Sir James Wright and the Price of Loyalty in Georgia*.

English-born James Wright was raised in Charleston, South Carolina, where his father served as chief justice of the colony. He followed in his father's footsteps, serving South Carolina as attorney general and colonial agent to London before beginning his tenure

as Georgia's third and final royal governor in 1761. *From Empire to Revolution* is the first in-depth biography of Wright, whose life Dr. Brooking uses to better understand the complex struggle for power in colonial Georgia and the wider British Empire.

Greg Brooking is a social studies teacher at North Springs High School in Atlanta. He received his Ph.D. from Georgia State University. Dr. Brooking won the 2024 Society of the Cincinnati of the State of South Carolina Fellowship to conduct research on Henry Laurens, a South Carolinian who served as president of the Continental Congress and U.S. Minister to the Netherlands during the Revolutionary War. His publications have appeared in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* and *General Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution in the South*, among others.

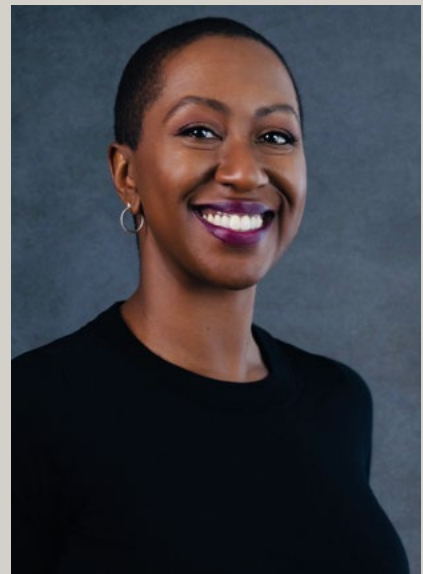
The program will be held at the **A.W. Jones Heritage Center** at 6 p.m. and will be recorded. The lecture is free for Society members and \$10 for non-members. To register, visit coastalgeorgiahistory.org.



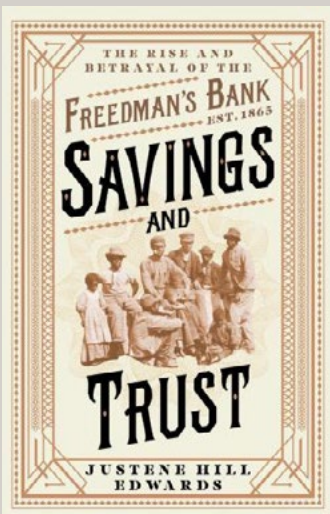
May Program

“Savings and Trust: The Rise and Betrayal of the Freedman’s Bank”

On Thursday, May 15, at 6 p.m., Justene Hill Edwards, Ph.D., will present a lecture based on her latest book, *Savings and Trust: The Rise and Betrayal of the Freedman’s Bank*. In the years immediately after the Civil War, tens of thousands of formerly enslaved people deposited millions of dollars into the Freedman’s Bank. African Americans envisioned this new bank as a launching pad for economic growth and self-determination, but only nine years after it opened, their trust was betrayed and the Freedman’s Bank collapsed. In *Savings and Trust*, Dr. Hill Edwards illuminates the hope with which the bank was first envisioned and demonstrates the significant setback that the sabotage of the bank caused in the fight for economic autonomy.



Justene Hill Edwards, Ph.D.



Justene Hill Edwards is an Associate Professor of History in the Corcoran Department of History at the University of Virginia. She received her Ph.D. in History from Princeton University. Her work investigates slavery’s role in the history of economic equality in America, focusing on the 18th and 19th centuries. She is also the author of *Unfree Markets: The Slaves’ Economy and the Rise of Capitalism in South Carolina*, published in 2021 by Columbia University Press. Her work has also been published in *The Washington Post*, *Business History Review*, and *Enterprise & Society*.

The program will be held at **St. Simons Presbyterian Church** at 6 p.m. It will not be recorded or live streamed. The lecture is free of charge, and registration is required by visiting coastalgeorgiahistory.org.

Georgia History Day at Oglethorpe Point Elementary School

On February 7, Allison Dupuis visited Oglethorpe Point Elementary School for the school’s annual Georgia History Day. Nearly 100 fifth grade students learned about the World War II Home Front Museum and its setting in the Historic St. Simons Coast Guard Station. After discussing the Coast Guard’s duties during World War II, students learned the flag semaphore, Morse code, and NATO phonetic alphabets, testing their knowledge of each by spelling words for their classmates to decode.



Society Welcomes New Board Members

The Society's committed Board of Directors provides wise counsel, advocacy, and critical support in many ways. We are most appreciative for the service of Lucy Glasebrook, Duane Harris, Jim Kielt, and Brenda Nease, who completed their Board terms in December. We look forward to working with our newly elected directors Greer Brown, Chris Ernst, Dr. Johnny Evans, and John Jaje.



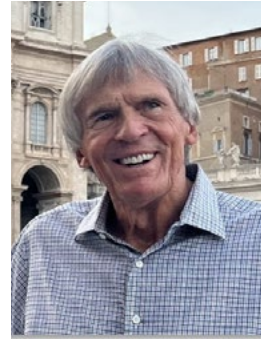
Greer Brown



Chris Ernst



Dr. Johnny Evans



John Jaje

Little Light Music Concert Series

Since 1998, residents and visitors have gathered on the oceanfront lawn beneath the Lighthouse for the Society's summer concert series. Bring your family, friends, a picnic supper, and lawn chairs for this special community tradition! The concerts are from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tickets are \$20 for adults; children under 12 and Keepers of the Light are admitted free of charge. No cash. We encourage you to purchase tickets in advance in the Museum Store or on the Society's website. For news and weather updates during the concert season, please visit our website or Facebook page.

The Society is grateful for the support of our 2025 concert sponsors:

MAY 11
The Tams

JUNE 15
Squirt Gun

JULY 27
Pine Box Dwellers

AUGUST 31
Sounds of Motown



A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

For those of you who were unable to attend the Winter Program on January 26, I am excited to share details from the meeting including the wonderful atmosphere and the announcement of our ambitious, new strategic plan, ***“Preserving the Past, Shaping the Future: 2030 Vision,”*** which will be released in full this spring.

One of the most inspiring discussions during the strategic planning process was a focus group with leaders from across the community. They saw the Society as a trusted partner and history as a powerful tool for building a stronger community. We have taken this to heart and over the next five years are eager to focus more energetically on our role as a partner, collaborator, and community resource.

In all that we do, we will be committed to working with others to deepen appreciation of our shared history.

We continue to be amazed by the centuries-long history and global significance of the Georgia Coast. The new plan directs us to expand our vision, capacity, and geographical reach to become **the center for the study of Coastal history that this region deserves.** This will include:

- Expanding the study of Coastal Archaeology as an essential component of understanding the past.
- Collecting important cultural and archaeological artifacts that are representative of the people who have lived here throughout history.
- Promoting research, scholarship, and quality educational experiences for all ages.
- And, sponsoring a regional conference on history, archaeology, and preservation utilizing local collaborations and generating greater community awareness of our region’s remarkable history.

What will it take to become a top-notch regional research and education center?

The Society is making a significant investment in our professional staff equal to improvements that we have made over the years to programs and facilities. Therefore, I am pleased to report the addition of a staff archaeologist to our team, Aaron Ellrich. Aaron holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Florida, as well as a master’s in museum studies. Aaron will ensure that archaeology is fully integrated into our educational activities and that the lab expands to serve the coastal region. With fieldwork experience in several southern states, Aaron looks forward to concentrating on our area. He will evaluate the needs of the Georgia Coast and play an important role as an expert advisor as we face climate change and disasters like the burning of the Huston House in Darien during 2024.



Aaron Ellrich, Ph.D.

Last year, I announced the imminent retirement of our Curator, Mimi Rogers. We have diligently searched for the right person to fill her shoes and provide the talents and experience needed by our bold new plan. Whitney Nell Stewart assumed the role of Director of Collections & Education on February 3. Whitney is joining us from the University of Texas at Dallas where she was an associate professor of history. She has a master's and Ph.D. in history from Rice University. Whitney recently published her first book, *This is Our Home: Slavery and Struggle on Southern Plantations*, which won several awards. Aaron and Whitney are scholars and experts in their fields who see the enormous opportunity that the study of our regional history provides. It was a wonderful moment to be able to introduce them to the membership!



Whitney Nell Stewart, Ph.D.

Lastly, I was thrilled to announce the Society's first endowed position, **The Ellen H. "Mimi" Rogers Director of Collections & Education**. The new fund will permanently recognize Mimi's unique contribution to building our reputation for excellence and her tireless efforts in pursuit of our cause over many years. It will provide perpetual, dedicated financial support for this senior leadership position. Over the past few months, we have secured commitments of approximately \$500,000 towards our goal of \$1 million!

Before addressing an audience of 350 people, our speaker and noted author Nathaniel Philbrick reacted to Mimi's recognition and the energy in the room by saying:

“Not often do I attend a Historical Society meeting and am moved to tears. Two new hires with Ph.D.’s who are tops in their fields. This is not your local coastal Historical Society. This is a Society that has truly national proportions, and it is a real pleasure to be here for this meeting.”

These are exciting times as we take intentional steps to transition and grow into a regional role. Your unfailing support over the past 15 years has provided the resources, participation, and feedback that we have needed to move forward in a purposeful way. Please join us as we break new ground and strive for excellence in preserving our past and serving others.

Sherri Jones

Executive Director

Winter Program Recap

At the Winter Program, Nathaniel Philbrick delivered a program based on research for his book, *In the Hurricane's Eye: The Genius of George Washington and the Victory at Yorktown*. His lecture incorporated Coastal Georgia connections from his work, including the life of Nathanael Greene, a major-general in the Continental Army who later resided at Mulberry Grove Plantation outside of Savannah. Greene died at Mulberry Grove in 1786, and George Washington later visited Greene's widow, Catharine, there. Following the lecture, a reception honoring Keepers of the Light was held at The Lodge at Sea Island.



Mimi Rogers, Keith Calhoun, Sherri Jones, Nathaniel Philbrick

Volunteer Awards

The Society could not achieve its mission of preserving and sharing Coastal Georgia's history without dedicated volunteers. During 2024, they contributed over 6,800 hours in our museums, administrative offices, archives, archaeology lab, Lighthouse tower, and at our events. We truly appreciate their time, enthusiasm, and support in all that we do to serve the community and our visitors.

Each year since 1978, the **Cunningham Bowl** has been awarded to a volunteer who has provided exemplary service to the Society during the previous year. The 2024 recipient, **Pam Balsley**, is a loyal and engaging docent at the Lighthouse Museum who enjoys sharing the history of our area with visitors from around the world. She also serves in the valuable role of school tour guide, ensuring a positive learning experience for students on field trips. We appreciate Pam's dedication to both of her roles. Last year she contributed well over 200 hours as a volunteer.



Sherri Jones, Pam Balsley, Mimi Rogers



Lucy Glasebrook

The Rodriguez Service Award was established in 2010, and each year honors exemplary acts of stewardship and service performed by a staff member, board member, or individual serving in an official capacity to the Society. The 2024 award was given to **Lucy Glasebrook**. A dedicated member of our Board, Lucy also served as a committed member of the Development Committee for the last six years. Throughout her service, she has been an active ambassador and advocate for the Society. As a member of the Development Committee, she fostered the growth of our Keeper of the Light program, hosting multiple events at her beautiful home. Her leadership as co-chair of the \$1.25 Preservation Campaign was critical to its success, and she and her husband, Dick, provided the lead gift. We are grateful for her generosity and the meaningful impact she has had on our organization.

Membership Highlights

Thank you to those who have generously upgraded their membership or increased their level of annual giving.

Keepers of the Light

Ann and Mark Chandler – Benefactor
Tammy and Andy Jetter – Sustainer
Debbie and Steve Kerr – Luminary
Susan and Tommy Lawhorne – Patron
Joanie and Stewart Long – Sustainer
Deb and Dan Luginbuhl – Patron

General

Carol and Bill Brockway – Lamplighter
Lorraine Duvall – Family
Donna and Pat Godbey –
Assistant Keeper
Russell Lewis – Family
Gretchen and Michael Negles –
Assistant Keeper
Mary and Bob Shell – Lamplighter

Welcome New Members!

Keepers of the Light

Francie and Pat Mulloy – Sustainer
Betty and Tom Price – Sustainer

General

Emily Armstrong – Individual
Chris and Amy Blazejowski – Family
Richard Burgner – Individual
Pat Cameron – Individual

Amy Chitwood – Individual
Betsey Clark – Individual
Margaret Dean – Individual
Josh Dukes – Individual
William Ehrensperger – Individual
Eric Jacobs – Lamplighter
Timothy Leach – Individual
Kathryn Lorenzo – Individual
Robin and Jack Nunn – Family
Nancy Paris – Individual
Donald Peacock – Individual
Diane Runkle – Family
Andy Shipp – Family
Wayne Simpson – Individual
David Smith – Individual
Tall Ship Lynx – Family
Jenifer Tate – Individual
Sheryl Trenor – Individual
Josiah Watts – Individual
Marie N. Younkin – Individual

Memorial and Tribute Gifts

In Honor of Susan Lawhorne
By Sherry Wade, Melinda Hunter, and Sharon Adams

The 2024 Annual Report is available for viewing under the About tab on our website, or you can stop by the office and pick up a copy. The report provides a comprehensive review of the past year. Many thanks for your loyal support which made these important member and community services possible.

Calendar of Events

“From Empire to Revolution: Sir James Wright and the Price of Loyalty in Georgia”

March 20

Greg Brooking, Ph.D.
6 p.m.

A.W. Jones Heritage Center
CGHS members free;
\$10 non-members

“Savings and Trust: The Rise and Betrayal of the Freedman’s Bank”

May 15

Justene Hill Edwards, Ph.D.
6 p.m.

St. Simons Presbyterian Church
Free of charge

Little Light Music

7-9 p.m.

Lighthouse grounds
\$20 per person

Free: Children under 12
and Keepers of the Light

May 11 – The Tams

June 15 – Squirt Gun

July 27 – Pine Box Dwellers

August 31 – Sounds of Motown



COASTAL GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 21136
St. Simons Island
Georgia 31522

FIRST CLASS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Brunswick, GA
31520
Permit No. 369

Our Staff

Executive Director
Sherri Jones

Director of Collections & Education
Whitney Nell Stewart, Ph.D.

Staff Archaeologist
Aaron Ellrich, Ph.D.

Director of Public Programming
Allison Dupuis

Director of Development
Sheila VanderWood

Public Relations Director
Leigh Ann Stroud

Office Manager
Trish Scott

Director of Retail Operations
Eric Oberg

Events Coordinator
Jessica Aldridge

Senior Historian
Buddy Sullivan

2025 Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Keith Calhoun
President

Mary Schellhorn
Immediate Past President

Steve Kerr
Vice President

Jeffrey Molitor
Treasurer

Janis Rehlaender
Secretary

Sherri Jones
Executive Director

Greer Brown
Jack Crews
Brad Danowski
Chris Ernst
Johnny Evans, Ph.D.
Shannon Gilreath
Cheryl Hargrove
John Hunter
John Jaje
Susan Lawhorne
Susan Myers

Call (912) 634-7090, follow us online,
or visit coastalgeorgiahistory.org

