

Newsletter

OF THE ATHENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 7745 • Athens, Georgia 30604-7745

May 2010

The Great Matter at Heart: Enlightening Ex-Slaves of Athens by Dr. Al Hester

followed by a panel discussion with the alumni of
Athens High & Industrial School

Sunday, May 2, 2010

**2:00 p.m. at Hill First Baptist Church
(on the corner of Reese and Pope Streets)**

☛ **please note new date, location and time!**



The program will celebrate the roles of the Knox Institute, Athens High & Industrial School, and other early efforts to educate former slaves. Hill First Baptist Church, a pioneer African-American church in Athens, will host the event. The church and its minister were deeply involved in educating Freedmen after the Civil War. The program is presented in cooperation with the Athens High & Industrial School alumni organization. Karen Witten will give a tour of the Reese-Pope Community Garden following the program.

The two-part program will feature a presentation by Dr. Al Hester, entitled “*The Great Matter at Heart – Enlightening Ex-Slaves of Athens: Earliest Attempts at Education in Athens After the Civil War.*” Following a short break with refreshments furnished by Hill First Baptist, alumni of the Athens High & Industrial School will take part in a panel discussion of the strides made in black education during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The public is invited to bring photos and memorabilia of the Knox Institute and of Athens High & Industrial School, and to participate in the discussion and share recollections.

Dr. Hester’s presentation will include photos and engravings of early education efforts by the U. S. Freedmen’s Bureau, the American Missionary Association, and others working to offer education to eager Athens black citizens. Some of the photos or engravings have not previously been made public. Sources include letters from missionary teachers, from Major John J. Knox, and records of the Freedmen’s Bureau.

“Athens’ first black schools began just months after the Civil War ended. U.S. military officers and enlisted men stationed in Athens staffed the first schools. The Knox School opened in December 1867. Teachers came from the North, and even from Nova Scotia to help Athens African Americans, although most whites in Athens gave little help,” Dr. Hester said. One of the earliest teachers was an enlisted drum major from a New York regiment, while another teacher was a Confederate veteran from a prominent Athens white family.

A prime leader was Major John J. Knox of Michigan, a Civil War Union hero, who was commissioner of the Athens Sub-District of the Freedmen’s Bureau. Major Knox served despite several threats of assassination and warnings by the Ku Klux Klan. Shortly before he left Athens in 1868, a detachment of federal troops was sent to Athens to protect him. A photo of Major Knox, for whom the Knox Institute was named, will be displayed in Athens for the first time.

Our speaker: Dr. Hester heads the research and history committee for the restored Gospel Pilgrim African-American Cemetery in East Athens. His wife Conoly and he are co-authors of *Athens, Georgia, Celebrating 200 Years at the Millennium*. He is professor emeritus at the University of Georgia.

AHS would like to thank the Hill First Baptist Church for hosting this meeting, and the alumni of the Athens High & Industrial School for their participation in the panel discussion. Thanks also to Wray and Karen Witten for their efforts.

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2010 AHS Officers

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AHS Board of Directors

2009-2010 term	2010-2011 term
Mary Anne Hoit Abbe	Charles Knox, Jr.
Jane Wilfong Mann	Judy Long
Marianne Gordon Rogers	Steven Scurry

Upcoming AHS Meeting Dates

June 20, 2010 –

Restoring the Jackson Street Cemetery

Janine Duncan, location TBA

September 2010

History of Winterville

Mary Quinn, location TBA

AHS Website & Information

www.rootsweb.com/~gaahs/

email: ebmayes@windstream.net

AHS Grants for Local Projects – The AHS board has voted to support several local history projects, including co-sponsoring a historical marker for the Athens High & Industrial School, the subject of our meeting on Sunday, May 2. Two grants have been made to the Heritage Room at the Athens-Clarke County Library to purchase microfilm of the Athens City Court Minutes, which are not available to researchers at any other location.

Oconee Hill Cemetery – Please respond ASAP to the mailer if you would like to purchase a copy of the reprint of Charlotte Thomas Marshall's annotated Volume I of the burials in the old section of the cemetery. This volume sold out in November! We must have a commitment of 100 copies to be purchased to justify a reprint of this lovely book.

Also, if you have research or family information about anyone buried in this historic cemetery, we hope you'll share it with us for Volume II or Volume III. Please email Eve with the best way to contact you about your information.

2010 Member Directory will be coming out in late May – if you have not renewed for 2010, we'll miss seeing your name in print!