

THE WREN'S NEST:
AN ATLANTA LANDMARK RECLAIMED

by

REBEKAH TAMAR HELFGOT

(Under the Direction of Wayde Brown)

ABSTRACT

The Wren's Nest, Atlanta's first house museum, was established in 1913. Formerly the home of author Joel Chandler Harris (1846 – 1908), Harris was best known for writing the Uncle Remus stories. The museum has a complicated history that involves Harris himself, the management of the museum, and the socio-cultural aspects of the time. Accusations of cultural appropriation inherent in Harris's use of the stories, the segregated site management, the association with Disney's *Song of the South*, and the changing demographics of the West End over the site's 105-year history, collide at the Wren's Nest. This thesis considers these topics in light of the Museum's current mission statement and strategic plan alongside two frameworks; one addressing practical house museum management and the other, the theory of third space. It provides an assessment of the Wren's Nest's potential to become a more valued, influential, and educational historic site.

INDEX WORDS: Historic house museum, Historic preservation, Site interpretation, Oral history, Uncle Remus, Joel Chandler Harris, the Wren's Nest

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Leslie Taylor and Ruben Helfgot. While it may be standard to dedicate a work such as this to parents, there is nothing standard about them. Mom and Dad, your love and guidance has been paramount to the person I am today. Thanks for agreeing to visit all the cemeteries and historic sites with me from when I was old enough to ask until now. Thank you for always believing in me. I love you.

I also would like to dedicate this to my grandfather, Richard Taylor, who passed away shortly before this was completed. May his memory always be for a blessing.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Wren's Nest, Atlanta's first house museum, is located prominently in the West End neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia.¹ It is on the National Register of Historic Places, and it is a National Historic Landmark.² This house, built in 1870, was made famous by its second owner, Joel Chandler Harris, author of the *Uncle Remus Stories*.³ Harris lived in the home from 1881 until his death in 1908, at which point his wife and children remained until the Uncle Remus Memorial Association acquired it in 1913.⁴ The *Uncle Remus Stories* were a staple of folklore for several generations of children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁵ Published in eight books from 1880 to 1918,⁶ Harris retold the stories that he had learned from enslaved people during his early years on Turnwold Plantation in central Georgia.⁷ Uncle Remus, described as one of the first fully formed African American literary figures, was based on an amalgamation of several enslaved people whom Harris

¹ National Register of Historic Places, The Joel Chandler Harris House (The Wren's Nest), Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia, Reference Number 66000281. 1.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Walter M. Brasch. "Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris." (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000). 344.

⁵ Stella B. Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Pr., 1972.) 30.

⁶ Books published after his death were collections of Harris' stories from magazines and newspapers. Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. 166, 168.

⁷ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 10.

came to know and looked up to over his years at Turnwold.⁸ The stories were theirs. Told through the voice of Uncle Remus, the tales of Br'er Rabbit, Br'er Fox, and Br'er Bear were tales of cunning and trickery.⁹ Heralded as a national treasure not only in the South, but across the country, Harris's literary standing during the early 20th century can be compared to that of Margaret Mitchell in the 1930s and 1940s or J.K. Rowling over the past two decades.¹⁰ Despite these historical and literary accolades, the Wren's Nest is one of the lesser-known sites in Georgia.¹¹ The house and its author have a complex past, in large part secondary to the socio-cultural aspects of the times.

I was first introduced to the Wren's Nest through a research paper during my first semester in graduate school. I was immediately drawn to the multifaceted nature of the site and the rich history that it told. In addition, I found it interesting that I had never been to the house museum before, despite it being in Atlanta, the city of my childhood. My mother had visited the house in elementary school around 1967 and had fond memories of it, as her mother had read the Br'er Rabbit stories to her. A generation later, my grandmother read them to me. In my initial research during the fall of 2016, I compiled a preliminary history on the management of the

⁸ Lain Shakespeare. "Uncle Remus Tales." The Wrens Nest RSS. Accessed April 07, 2018. http://www.wrensnest.org/about_stories.php.

⁹ Julia Collier Harris, *The Life and Letters of Joel Chandler Harris*. 1918. 158.

¹⁰ *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Joel Chandler Harris*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o180210>. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University

¹¹ Lain Shakespeare, "Interview with Former Executive Director of the Wren's Nest and Great-Grand Child of Joel Chandler Harris," In person interview by author, October 27, 2017.

museum, but there were several large gaps that needed to be filled and managerial styles that needed to be explained. I was also intrigued by the social implications of a formerly segregated house museum operating within a predominantly African American neighborhood. In the site I saw the potential to explore the connection that preservation has with community.

This thesis will serve to answer the following question: *What is the role of the Wren's Nest today and how can it become a more valued, influential, and educational historic site?* In the following chapters, I will provide an overview of the man – Joel Chandler Harris, the house – the Wren's Nest, and the community in which it resides– Atlanta and the West End. Using a practical framework provided in the *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums*, and a theoretical framework, third space theory, I will provide an assessment of the current strategic plan, followed by opportunities to enhance the Museum's mission.¹²

Methodology

The methodology of this thesis is a combination of literary and archival research utilizing both primary and secondary sources. Interviews were conducted with the staff of the Wren's Nest, including Harris's great-great-great grandson. Interviews with individuals living in Atlanta, and in particular, the West End during the time periods in question were deemed beyond the scope of this study as an historic preservation Master's thesis; however, I did reach out to current

¹² Franklin D. Vagnone, Deborah E. Ryan, and Olivia B. Cothren. *Anarchists guide to historic house museums*. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2016.

neighborhood organizations. Further research is critical to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the socio-cultural movements that surround the over 100-year period of the house museum.

Beginning with his commonly accepted illegitimate birth and his mother's emphasis on education, Joel Chandler Harris's childhood will be sourced from various biographies of his life. The most prominent of these included Walter Brasch's recent, comprehensive analysis of Harris's life in *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist'*.¹³ His teen years on Turnwold Plantation and his introduction to both journalism and to the stories that he learned from and always attributed to the enslaved people – stories that would bring him great success – are also sourced from Brasch as well as Stella Brookes' book *Joel Chandler Harris, Folklorist* in which she provides origin information of the stories and interprets Harris's use of them.¹⁴ These resources are the main sources for information on his career in journalism, and his life at the Wren's Nest in the West End neighborhood of Atlanta. Celebrations and criticisms of his works will be addressed using, in part, analyses through time that were compiled in *Joel Chandler Harris: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism with Supplement* by Bruce Bickley and Hugh Keenan, archival research from The Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, and *Disney's Most Notorious Film: Race, Convergence, and the Hidden Histories of Song of the South* by Jason Sperb.¹⁵

¹³ Walter M. Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000).

¹⁴ Stella B. Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Pr., 1972.)

¹⁵ R. Bruce Bickley and Hugh T. Keenan. 1997. *Joel Chandler Harris: an annotated bibliography of criticism, 1977-1996: with supplement, 1892-1976*.

Information regarding the history of the institutional management of the Wren's Nest is taken from a combination of interviews, existing literature, and archival research from libraries, online resources, and the records housed at the Wren's Nest. The archives, currently located in the attic and the management office of the Museum, hold a variety of resources that were utilized for this research element. Scrapbooks, brochures, invitations, photographs, and meeting minutes were used to expand the current known history of the management of the Museum. Additionally, the Special Collections Library at the University of Georgia provided access to the records of W. Lane Greene, the restoration architect who was hired in the mid-1980s. Interviews were conducted from October 2017 through April 2018 with the following individuals: Lain Shakespeare, a descendant of Joel Chandler Harris and former Executive Director of the Wren's Nest from 2006-2011; Melissa Swindell, current Executive Director of the Wren's Nest; Kalin Thomas, Program Director of the Wren's Nest; and Marquis McNeal, President of the West End Neighborhood Development, Inc.

In order to provide context for the Wren's Nest, both as it exists within Atlanta and the West End, research was conducted in order to provide a history of the major elements of change within the city and the neighborhood. This

n.p.: Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997; Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o180210>. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Dickinson State University; Jason Sperb. *Disney's Most Notorious Film: Race, Convergence, and the Hidden Histories of Song of the South*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013

information for the West End was acquired from the 1999 National Register of Historic Places nomination that ultimately led to the West End gaining Historic District status. Supplemental information was obtained from the New Georgia Encyclopedia, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, and Home Owners Lending Company Maps of the area. Atlanta history was acquired from the 2014 comprehensive planning book *Planning Atlanta* edited by Harley Etienne and Barbara Faga.¹⁶ This compilation of 28 chapters provided developmental history, change-over-time demographic and population analysis, and transportation project history. Discussion of the BeltLine is sourced from the official BeltLine website, a 2017 thesis “Race, Class, and Gentrification Along the Atlanta BeltLine” by Natalie Camrud, and Professor Dan Immergluck’s economic and geographic study from 2009, “Large Redevelopment Initiatives, Housing Values and Gentrification: The Case of the Atlanta BeltLine.”¹⁷ Specific West End census information was acquired using Social Explorer, an online collection of socio-economic data.

The practical and theoretical frameworks used to analyze the strategic plan and mission of the site were sourced from the *Anarchist’s Guide to Historic House Museums* and online sites addressing the theory of Third Space, respectively. The 2017 Strategic Plan was provided by the Executive Director.

¹⁶ Harley F. Etienne and Barbara Faga, *Planning Atlanta* (Chicago: APA Planners 2014).

¹⁷ Natalie Camrud. "Race, Class, and Gentrification Along the Atlanta BeltLine"

(2017). *Scripps Senior Theses*. 947.

http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/947; Dan Immergluck. "Large Redevelopment Initiatives, Housing Values and Gentrification: The Case of the Atlanta BeltLine." *Urban Studies* 46.8 (2009)

Organization of Thesis

Chapter 2 will focus on Joel Chandler Harris, the man, and his life story. To more fully understand the history of the Wren's Nest, the life of the man who led to the site's fame will be presented. This chapter provides biographical information from his humble beginnings in Eatonton, Georgia to his death, as one of America's most celebrated authors of the time. This chapter will provide information needed to understand why the museum exists, why Harris was an important individual, and the evolution of the celebrations and criticisms that exist surrounding his work.

Chapter 3 will focus on the history of the institutional management of the site. Three different organizations have managed the site over its history: first, the Uncle Remus Memorial Association (1909-1958); second, the Joel Chandler Harris Memorial Association (1958-1983); and third, the Joel Chandler Harris Association (1984- present). For each of these organizations, fundraising efforts, managerial approaches, interactions with the community, and physical changes to the site will be presented. This chapter will provide information that will help answer the research question regarding site history as it relates to influence and value in the past.

Chapter 4 will provide contextual information about the cultural and geographic landscape in which the Wren's Nest resides. A concise developmental history for both city and neighborhood will be presented that ranges from the founding to the present. Topics that will be addressed include settlement development, institutionalization, civil rights efforts, infrastructure development, and demographic changes over time.

Chapter 5 will discuss the current mission and goals of the Wren's Nest and review the recently-ratified Strategic Plan. Next, the chapter will introduce two frameworks from which the operations of the House will be considered: the practical framework from the *Anarchist's Guide To Historic House Museums*, and the theoretical framework of the Third Space theory. Finally, the chapter will analyze and provide an assessment of specific aspects of the current mission and strategic plan guided by the two frameworks, and supported by the research presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

Chapter 6 will summarize the role of the Wren's Nest today and its potential to be a more valued, influential, and educational historic site.



Figure 1: The Wren's Nest Front Facade. Photo by Author October 27, 2016

CHAPTER 2

THE MAN AND THE STORIES

This chapter will present information on Joel Chandler Harris's humble beginnings, his journalism career, his life at the Wren's Nest, and his literary work through his death in 1908. Attention will also be given to reactions his writings received both during and after his life.

"He was a red-headed, short, stuttering, stammering, Irish, bastard."¹⁸ As described by his great-great-great grandson, Lain Shakespeare, Harris wrote himself out of poverty and into libraries and homes across America, the epitome of the American Dream. It was even said of him in a 1950 biography, "Certainly no American needs to be introduced to the beloved Georgian, Joel Chandler Harris."¹⁹ But not even three generations after that powerful statement was made, most Americans would need an introduction to Harris and his works. What caused this? Was it the mere passage of time, or something deeper? To understand the current predicament of the house in which he lived in Atlanta, as well as the controversy that mires his stories today, his life must be examined.

¹⁸ Lain Shakespeare, "Interview with Former Executive Director of the Wren's Nest and Great-Grand Child of Joel Chandler Harris," In person interview by author, October 27, 2017.

¹⁹ Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. xiii.

Joel Chandler Harris Beginnings (1846-1862)

Harris was born in Eatonton, Georgia in 1846.²⁰ The city of Eatonton, located in Putnam County about 80 miles southeast of Atlanta, was an agricultural center that, like much of Georgia and the South, relied on the plantation system economy. His mother, Mary Harris, was an educated woman from a middle-Georgian family.²¹ It has been speculated that in her early 20s she had a relationship with an itinerant Irish worker.²² According to the strict class structure of the nineteenth century, the Irish immigrant would have been considered well below her class and not accepted by her family.²³ This man, thought to be Harris's father, and whose identity remains unknown, abandoned Mary before Harris was born.²⁴ At around 28 years of age, Mary Harris gave birth to Joel, and though numerous marriage proposals came her way, she remained devoted to raising her son alone, whom she supported through her work as a seamstress.²⁵ Although Harris's mother did not pay for his education, which was provided by a generous neighbor, she did instill in him a love for literature through the many books she read to him.²⁶ Harris attended Eatonton Male Academy until the age of 14, when a work opportunity arose.²⁷

²⁰ Robert Bone. *Critical Essays on Joel Chandler Harris*. Edited by R. Bruce Bickley. Boston: Mass., 1981. 135.

²¹ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 1.

²² R. Bruce Bickley. *Joel Chandler Harris*. G. K. Hall and Co., 1978. 15.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Griska, Joseph M., Jr. *Critical Essays on Joel Chandler Harris*. Edited by R. Bruce Bickley. Boston: Mass., 1981. 212

²⁵ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 2.

²⁶ Bickley. *Joel Chandler Harris*. 16.

²⁷ Ibid., 18.

The Plantation Years (1862-1866)

On March 4, 1862, plantation owner Joseph Addison Turner posted an advertisement in search of a printer's devil, the contemporary term for a typesetter.²⁸ Turner was in the process of establishing a newspaper. This newspaper, *The Countryman*, was published to provide the people of Putnam County and surrounding regions with "essays, poems, sketches, agricultural articles, and choice miscellany... and to relieve the minds of our people somewhat from the engrossing topic of war news."²⁹ At the height of subscription, it reached over 2,000 homes, was one of the largest circulating papers in the South, and interestingly, the only newspaper published on a plantation.³⁰

Harris moved from his mother's home to the Turnwold Plantation in 1862 for this new position with *The Countryman*.³¹ While there, he befriended many of the enslaved people from whom he heard the stories of the forest animals which later brought him fame.³² George Terrell and Betsy Evans were two enslaved people on Turnwold Plantation whose experiences Harris crafted into the essence of Uncle Remus and Aunt Minervy Ann, respectively.³³ Terrell and Evans are just two of the names that are known, but Harris admitted that other enslaved people's stories

²⁸ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 6.

²⁹ Joseph Addison Turner, "Prospectus," *The Countryman*, 15 April 1862.

³⁰ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 7.

³¹ Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. 5

³² National Register of Historic Places, The Joel Chandler Harris House (The Wren's Nest), Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia, Reference Number #66000281. 4.

³³ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 10.

were added to the amalgamation that would become the end result of the human characters in the *Uncle Remus* tales.³⁴ Harris listened to the enslaved people, heard their stories, and heard how the stories were told.

The trickster tales, a theme that is prevalent in many traditional stories around the world, has particularly strong roots in African folktales. In these stories, an apparently weaker character uses “cunning and mental agility to overcome stupidity and undaunted strength positioned against him.”³⁵ The traditional trickster animals in African storytelling, the jackal and hyena, were changed to fit the American environment and its native animals; Br’er Rabbit was the new trickster.³⁶ For Harris the tales themselves were intriguing, but so too was the manner of oral transmission. It would be the combination of subject and dialect that would set the *Uncle Remus* stories apart from others when Harris retold them years later.³⁷ Through his five years spent on Turnwold Plantation, Harris learned much traditional African and African American folklore that he would reference from his memory and use the rest of his life.³⁸

While working as a devil’s apprentice, Harris authored as many as 30 identifiable articles, reviews, and poems.³⁹ *The Countryman* operated through May 1866, at which time Turner ended production due to financial difficulties following

³⁴ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the ‘Cornfield Journalist’: The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

³⁷ Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. 112.

³⁸ Robert J. McNutt, and Thomas J. Cassidy. "Joel Chandler Harris." *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia* (January 2016): *Research Starters*, EBSCOhost (accessed Oct 27, 2016)

³⁹ Bickley. *Joel Chandler Harris*. 21.

the Civil War.⁴⁰ Harris worked at the paper through its entirety of production, for although he was of age to be drafted into the Confederate Army, he was considered too “frail and feeble.”⁴¹

Early Journalism Career (1866-1876)

After the Civil War, Harris worked for a variety of newspapers across the Southeast. His first job outside Eatonton and Putnam County was at the *Macon Telegraph* in Macon, Georgia, where he worked as a typesetter.⁴² Six months later, Harris moved to New Orleans, Louisiana and worked as the personal secretary to the Editor of the *Crescent Monthly*.⁴³ After six months he returned to Georgia, this time as an Associate Editor for the *Monroe Advertiser* located in Forsyth, Georgia.⁴⁴ Following his work in Forsyth, Harris’s penultimate stop on his road to the Wren’s Nest was as an Associate Editor at the *Savannah Morning News (SMN)*, the most read newspaper in Georgia at the time.⁴⁵ In 1872 in Savannah, Harris met Esther LaRose, the daughter of a French-Canadian sea captain whose ships sailed the routes along the Georgian and North Floridian coast.⁴⁶ Joel and Esther married in 1873 and by

⁴⁰ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the ‘Cornfield Journalist’: The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 16.

⁴¹ Brasch., *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the “Cornfield Journalist”: The tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 13.

⁴² Thomas H. English. *Critical Essays on Joel Chandler Harris*. Edited by R. Bruce Bickley. Boston: Mass., 1981. 64.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Brasch., *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the “Cornfield Journalist”: The tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 26.

⁴⁶ Bickley. *Joel Chandler Harris*. 28.

1875 had their first two sons, Julian and Lucian.⁴⁷ Harris worked at the *SMN* from 1870 through 1876, when he crossed paths with an acquaintance from his time at the *Monroe Advertiser*, Henry Grady.⁴⁸

The Atlanta Constitution (1876-1900)

Grady, now the Editor for the *Atlanta Constitution*, hired Harris away from the *SMN*.⁴⁹ Grady's goal was to strengthen the Reconstruction South and use the *Constitution* as a means of promoting its successes.⁵⁰ Harris's work at the *Atlanta Constitution* would comprise the remainder of his career. He would rise to Chief Editorial Writer and Associate Editor over his 24 years at the *Constitution*, and would begin to record the stories he heard at Turnwold Plantation.⁵¹

Harris first introduced the readership to Uncle Remus in an 1878 column in the *Atlanta Constitution*. The column, devoted to "pithy and philosophical sayings," was the perfect opportunity for Harris's creation of a wise, former slave whose stories were recounted in a Middle-Georgia dialect.⁵² Harris was not the first white author to write in this style or use traditional folk stories, but he was by far the most successful up until this point, and this success even spurred on "the greatest flood of

⁴⁷ Joseph M. Griska Jr. *Critical Essays on Joel Chandler Harris*. Edited by R. Bruce Bickley. Boston: Mass., 1981. 215, 216.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁹ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 36.

⁵⁰ Perry, Chuck. "Atlanta Journal-Constitution." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. Accessed March 31, 2018. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/atlanta-journal-constitution>.

⁵¹ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 37.

⁵² Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. 28.

dialectic literature America has ever known.”⁵³ For example, one of the better-known works that followed utilizing dialect was *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, a close friend of Harris.⁵⁴

Newspapers across the country reprinted Harris’s columns, and in 1880 his first book, *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings*, was published as a compilation of many of his newspaper columns.⁵⁵ One of his most famous re-tellings is the story of the Tar Baby, which was first published in 1879.⁵⁶ In this trickster tale, Br’er Fox tries to catch his enemy Br’er Rabbit. He fools Br’er Rabbit into thinking that a lump of molded tar that he passes on the road is a fellow creature. Br’er Rabbit becomes angry when he talks to Tar Baby and gets no response. He hits Tar Baby in order to elicit a response, but instead gets stuck in the material. Br’er Fox then appears to laugh at his foe, whom he has caught, but Br’er Rabbit manages to escape using reverse psychology: through fervent pleading to not be thrown into the briar patch, that is just what Br’er Fox does, and Br’er Rabbit, a native of the briar patch, is free.

The book, which included the above story, was an immediate success and made Harris a household name across the country.⁵⁷ He was lauded by casual readers and folklorists alike. Literary and anthropology academics praised his ability to capture, with such aptitude, the tales that were brought from Africa on

⁵³ Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist* 23.

⁵⁴ David Carkeet. The Dialects in Huckleberry Finn. *American Literature*, 1979. 51(3), 315-332.

⁵⁵ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the ‘Cornfield Journalist’: The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 65.

⁵⁶ Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. 22.

⁵⁷ Robert J. McNutt, and Thomas J. Cassidy. "Joel Chandler Harris." *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia* (January 2016): *Research Starters*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 22, 2016).

slave ships; the children of America loved the stories for their wit, charm, and humor.⁵⁸

In addition to publishing his first book and continuing to write columns for the *Constitution*, Harris wrote an additional seven *Uncle Remus* books while living at the Wren's Nest.⁵⁹ These books have been translated into more than twenty-seven languages.⁶⁰ In addition to children's literature, Harris wrote novels, narrative histories, accounts of life in rural Georgia, and he even translated a French novel by Frederic Ortolé, *Evening Tales*, into English.⁶¹ However, none of these works would ever be as widely read or appreciated in their time or after as the *Uncle Remus* stories.⁶²

Home at the Wren's Nest

From 1881 until his death in 1908, Harris wrote from the porch of the Wren's Nest.⁶³ He and his family rented the house for two years before purchasing it in 1883. Originally built in 1870 as a simple one-story farmhouse, the house has been known by three names. Initially, the house was known as the Broomhead Tract after the original occupants, then as the Snapbean Farm since the house was located on

⁵⁸ Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. 30.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 166-168.

⁶⁰ Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. 166, 168.

⁶¹ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 70.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶³ National Register of Historic Places, The Joel Chandler Harris House (The Wren's Nest), Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia, Reference Number 66000281. 2.

five acres of land which included a large field of vegetables.⁶⁴ Finally, the house was named the Wren's Nest by the Harris children when they noted that wrens made their nests in the family's mailbox.⁶⁵ In 1883, Harris hired architect George P. Humphreys to turn the house into a one-and-a-half-story frame cottage. A front parlor, living room, foyer, and veranda were added, as well as a small room upstairs. The renovations by Humphreys also added Victorian decorative elements like railing cutouts, polychromatic paint choices, and both an asymmetrical house plan and elevation consistent with the contemporary houses being built in the West End at the time. Being a family of ten (Joel, Esther, Harris's mother Mary, and their 7 children at the time), these renovations suggest that the Harrises were in need of more space, and that they had enough expendable income to update their small farmhouse into a more current Queen Anne Revival influenced house.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 134.

⁶⁵ Bickley. *Joel Chandler Harris*. 40.

⁶⁶ *Dearest Chums and Partners: Joel Chandler Harris's Letters to His Children: A Domestic Biography*, ed. Hugh T. Keenan. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993. 219.



Figure 2: Original Configuration of the Wren's Nest. Date unknown, but between 1870-1883. Unknown Photographer. Picture from the Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

Harris was known to have been very shy, and described his shyness as an “affliction.”⁶⁷ He had trouble speaking in public, and was even unable to read his own stories to his children.⁶⁸ Harris took the streetcar from the West End into town to pick up his assignments from the *Atlanta Constitution* then returned to his home to complete his writing on the front porch.⁶⁹ The Wren's Nest was a place of safety

⁶⁷ Joel Chandler Harris, *Diary of Joel Chandler Harris 1870 Entry*

⁶⁸ Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. 17.

⁶⁹ National Register of Historic Places, *Joel Chandler Harris House (The Wren's Nest)*, Atlanta, Fulton, Georgia, 66000218. 2.

and comfort for him.⁷⁰ It also served as a haven for African Americans during the 1906 Atlanta Race Riots when Harris and his family sheltered African Americans in the basement away from angry, white crowds that killed an estimated 25-40 African Americans over three days.⁷¹

On July 3, 1908, Harris died at the age of 61 from complications resulting from chronic cirrhosis of the liver, an illness that plagued the last five years of his life.⁷² He left behind his wife of 35 years, Esther LaRose Harris, and their six surviving adult children. Harris died in his bedroom.

Responses to His Writings

Critiques of Harris, Uncle Remus, and the stories run the gamut from condemnation to appreciation. These critiques, from solitary statements to entire books, must be considered within the complexity of the socio-cultural aspects of a time period that runs from pre-Civil War slavery through Reconstruction, the Great Depression, two World Wars, the Civil Rights era, the Vietnam War, and today's Black Lives Matter movement. This thesis does not, and cannot, provide a comprehensive look at all the views expressed or responses to Harris's writing; rather, the intent is to highlight some of the major themes, both positive and negative, that were raised across the time period from 1880 to 2018 as a means to capture the wide variance of opinions related to the man and his stories.

⁷⁰ Bickley. *Joel Chandler Harris*. 40.

⁷¹ National Register of Historic Places, West End Historic District, Atlanta, Fulton, Georgia, 97000612. 20.

⁷² Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 257, 256.

In 1880, at the beginning of his foray into writing *Uncle Remus*, Harris wrote that there was an affinity to the theme of stories that have the “hero (the rabbit) being the weakest and most harmless of all animals, and brings him out victorious in contests with the bear, the wolf and the fox. It is not virtue that triumphs, but helplessness; it is not malice, but mischievousness.”⁷³ Not only did these stories of the weaker character persevering relate to Harris’s beginnings as a fatherless child who stuttered and was intensely shy, but also to slaves and current free men of the 1920s who found ways to rise above a system of oppression. The stories that were beloved by so many white people had, directly under their surface, imagery of slaves outsmarting their masters using the same trickster themes employed by Br’er Rabbit.⁷⁴

Contemporary African Americans of Harris’s, like George Washington Carver, praised his work.⁷⁵ Mark Twain called Harris the “only master” of African American dialect at the time and was an admirer of his works, having four of Harris’s books in his personal library.⁷⁶ Other admirers of Harris’s writings included notable Americans Andrew Carnegie and President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt read to his children the Uncle Remus stories, which they adored, leading to a friendship between the two men. Harris even traveled to the White House upon an invitation

⁷³ Joel Chandler Harris. *Uncle Remus, His Songs and Sayings*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1880. Introduction.

⁷⁴ Harris, *The Life and Letters of Joel Chandler Harris*. 158.

⁷⁵ Betty Parham. “Dixie Memories: Joel Chandler Harris, 1848-1908.” *Atlanta Constitution* (December 9, 1984): 3- F.

⁷⁶ Alan Gibben. *Mark Twain’s Library: A Reconstruction. Volume I*. (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1980). 295, 296.

from Roosevelt in 1907.⁷⁷ The Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library has a collection of letters exchanged between the two men. One such letter from the President to

Harris on October 12, 1901 states:

Your art is not only as art in addition to our sum of national achievement, but has also always been an addition to the forces that tell for decency, and above all for the blotting out of sectional antagonism.⁷⁸

Roosevelt's high praise for his friend in a private letter is noteworthy as it reflects his thoughts of how Harris's writings were unifying elements in an America that was only a generation removed from the Civil War. Roosevelt praised him for helping bridge the gap between Northern and Southern cultures by writing down stories loved by all Americans regardless of geography or social stature. Even through 1922, Harlem Renaissance and Civil Rights leader James Weldon Johnson said that the stories were the "greatest body of folklore that America has produced."⁷⁹

Critiques in the early decades following the initial publications of the stories appear to be limited to the question of the originality of the tales. The similarities that the tales had with other popular folk tales around the world were raised, but Harris had always called himself "an accidental author" and merely a transcriber of tales he heard growing up.⁸⁰ A 1919 article proposed that Tar Baby was actually a

⁷⁷ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 215.

⁷⁸ *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Joel Chandler Harris*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/DigitalLibrary/Record?libID=o180210>. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University

⁷⁹ James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, 1922. 10.

⁸⁰ Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. 23.

Native American story, Gum-Man or Tar-Man, which mixed with traditional African folktales upon the meeting of the two cultures.⁸¹

A 1919 review noted the following about the stories. “Uncle Remus is a warm and lovable creation. The old storyteller also sums up the best characteristics of the negro race at a special period in its history—the time of its slavery”.⁸² This interpretation, though problematic—if not horrifying—by modern standards, reflects the favorable attitudes that were felt during this era towards Remus. It accentuates the romanticized view of antebellum life that was perpetuated during this time as part of the collective memory of the “Lost Cause.”⁸³

Criticism of Harris, Uncle Remus, and the stories escalated following the release of *Song of the South*, the 1946 Walt Disney movie that was an adaptation of four *Uncle Remus* stories. The film’s initial impact and its subsequent four re-releases from 1956 to 1986 will be addressed in Chapter 3, but it is important to note that criticism of Harris and his writings cannot be considered without an awareness of the movie. Critics of the film associated its faults with Harris himself and this association remains strong to this day.

Criticism further grew with the Civil Rights Movement. Notable African Americans voiced the issues they had with the stories. In a 1963 interview W. E. B. Du Bois said that Harris saw African Americans as “a separated, lesser citizen... He

⁸¹ Mary Austin. “Br’er Rabbit and The Tar Baby. (A New Mexico Variant of the most Popular American Folk Tale).” *El Palacio VI* (1919): 205-06.

⁸² John M. McBride. “Brer Rabbit in the Folk-Tales of Negro and Other Races.” *Sewanee Review* 19.2 (April 1919): [185]-206.

⁸³ Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan. *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2010.

[Harris] unhesitatingly lived up to a paternalistic role, a sort of *noblesse oblige*⁸⁴.”⁸⁵

Alice Walker is another well-known voice on the matter. Walker, best known for her 1983 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Color Purple*, was born into a sharecropping family two miles from Turnwold Plantation, the location where Harris was told the stories.⁸⁶ Walker and Harris viewed their hometowns through very different lenses. While Harris romanticized his years on the Plantation, Walker’s presentation of the same landscape is fraught with inequality, misogyny, lynching, and oppression.⁸⁷ Walker came of age during the Civil Rights Movement, and attended Spelman College, near the Wren’s Nest. Her vitriol was further exacerbated by the film, *Song of the South*. She stated:

As far as I’m concerned [Harris] stole a good part of my heritage... In creating uncle Remus, he placed an effective barrier between me and the stories that meant so much to me, the stories that could have meant so much to all our children, the stories that they would have heard from us and not from Walt Disney.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Merriam- Webster definition: the obligation of honorable, generous, and responsible behavior associated with high rank or birth.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/noblesse%20oblige>

⁸⁵ Ralph McGill. “W.E.B. DuBois” *Atlantic Monthly* 216 (November 1965): 78-79; Wayne Mixon. “The Ultimate Irrelevance of Race: Joel Chandler Harris and Uncle Remus in Their Time.” *The Journal of Southern History* 56, no. 3 (August 1990): 457-80. doi:10.2307/2210286.

⁸⁶ “Distance from Turnwold to Alice Walker Birthplace.” Google Maps. Accessed April 16, 2018. <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Turnwold+Plantation/@33.3848222,-83.2872325,5889m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x88f69372e41e4563:0x28e2c574fce8fd0f!8m2!3d33.3672394!4d-83.2849794>.

⁸⁷ Ellen Johnson. “Geographic Context and Ethnic Context: Joel Chandler Harris and Alice Walker.” *The Mississippi Quarterly*, March 22, 2007, 236.

⁸⁸ Alice Walker. “Uncle Remus, No Friend of Mine.” *The Georgia Review* 66, no. 3 (2012): 635-37. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/23268234>.

Walker notes that folklore is ripe with the possibilities of misinterpretation, especially when in the hands of an outsider.⁸⁹ Harris, who viewed himself as an outsider because of his humble beginnings and self-identified personal failings, was still a young white man and an outsider to the stories that he heard on Turnwold Plantation. He also retold the stories as an adult from much different circumstances of social standing and power. In contrast, literature professor and Harris proponent Robert Cochran challenged Walker's appeal. Cochran states, "Joel Chandler Harris didn't 'steal' Alice Walker's inheritance. It was given to him. And it was given to him as it was given to her, orally, by older people with lessons to teach speaking to younger people with lessons to learn."⁹⁰

Scholar John Goldthwaite said in his 1996 book on children's literature, "we can regret that the best of all American books ever handed down to children is a book we cannot in good conscience read them."⁹¹ Goldthwaite thinks highly of the stories and sees Harris as an individual who faithfully "rescued the oral tradition" through his books. Yet, he recognizes the complexities surrounding the works and reasons why they were abandoned by many American families.⁹² "An Uncle Remus may have been the right, the necessary choice of character for the telling of these tales, but he was, everyone agreed, the wrong one for preserving them."⁹³

Goldthwaite notes how Remus did not age well in the minds of many; African

⁸⁹ Walker. "Uncle Remus, No Friend of Mine." 635.

⁹⁰ Robert Cochran. "Black Father: and the Subversive Achievement of Joel Chandler Harris" *African American Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), 33.

⁹¹ John Goldthwaite. *The Natural History of Make-believe: A Guide to the Principal Works of Britian, Europe, and America*. Oxford University Press. 1996. 256.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 255.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

American families did not like the idea of telling their children what they perceived as a “happy slave” narrative, and socially conscious white families ignored the stories as a part of a shameful past.⁹⁴

Opposing views of Harris, his work, and his intent continue into the twenty-first century, as evidenced by praise in 2002 by Keith Cartright who called him “genius,” and counter to that, by Mark Schone who identified him as “beyond redemption.”⁹⁵ The volume of Harris’s work allows for the debate to flourish as Harris has many contradictory views that can be found in his newspaper articles, books, and short stories that span almost 45 years, from his work at *The Countryman* until his death.⁹⁶ Much of the vitriol surrounding Joel Chandler Harris that continues to this day could be derived from misinformation and misattribution of the failures of a Disney production onto a man whose goal was not division, but unity. In a 1905 letter to Theodore Roosevelt regarding the creation of the Uncle Remus Home Magazine, Harris said that part of the mission behind it was “the obliteration of prejudice against blacks, the demand for a square deal, and the uplifting of both races so that they can look justice in the face without blushing.”⁹⁷ This statement illuminates the irony that surrounds the views of Harris, Uncle Remus, and the stories. Harris was a progressive man of his day and age whose

⁹⁴ Goldthwaite. *The Natural History of Make-believe: A Guide to the Principal Works of Britian, Europe, and America*. 255.

⁹⁵ Johnson. "Geographic Context and Ethnic Context: Joel Chandler Harris and Alice Walker." 238, 239.

⁹⁶ Bickley. *Joel Chandler Harris*. 148.

⁹⁷ Brasch. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 258.

intention was not to offend, but to uplift. Despite his intentions, the more negative sentiment towards Harris still exists today.

From his childhood in Putnam County to his role as a world-renowned author, this chapter provides information about Joel Chandler Harris's life and his connection to the Wren's Nest. It also provides background on the origins of the stories that he, a self-proclaimed "accidental author" compiled over decades in books, newspapers, and magazines. Lastly, this chapter gives an overview of the celebration and criticism that his works have received throughout the years from scholars, fellow authors, and politicians.

CHAPTER 3

INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT

This chapter will detail why the Wren's Nest as a museum was created, how it was created, and major events in its history from 1913 to the present. Fundraising activities, managerial philosophies, and interactions with the community will be addressed.

House Museum Origins

In 1853, a group of private citizens known as the Mount Vernon Ladies Association worked together to purchase George Washington's home in order to save it from destruction, and to preserve it for future generations.⁹⁸ This coalition was led by Northern and Southern women who saw the value in preserving the home where America's first president lived from 1759 until his death in 1799.⁹⁹ This became the first house museum in America.¹⁰⁰ Prior to legislation enacted throughout the twentieth century, purchasing a house to create a museum was a popular method of preservation in America.¹⁰¹ The Mount Vernon Ladies

⁹⁸ Tyler, Norman, Ted Ligibel, and Ilene Tyler. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practices*. 2nd ed. W. W. Norton and Company, 2009. 29.

⁹⁹ "Washington, D.C. Exhibit and Museum Reviews." *The Public Historian* 25, no. 2 (2003): 101.

¹⁰⁰ Norman, Ligibel, and Tyler. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practices*. 29; Horace M. Towner. "The Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union." *Annals of Iowa*. 12, no. 5 (July 1920): 359

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

Association set a precedent of how a small group of determined individuals could band together to save what they believed to be a significant historic landmark for the benefit of the public.¹⁰² This model of a woman-led, grassroots preservation movement can also be seen with the establishment of the Wren's Nest.

Uncle Remus Memorial Association (1909-1958)

Fundraising

Upon Joel Chandler Harris's death in 1908, plans were already under consideration for his house to be purchased by the newly formed Uncle Remus Memorial Association (URMA).¹⁰³ It is worthwhile to note that the association was not named for Harris himself, but rather for the character with whom he was so often associated. URMA advertised their plans to purchase the home and the spacious grounds from Harris's estate in newspapers across the state of Georgia.¹⁰⁴ "The residence will be kept intact, the same furniture that Uncle Remus used, the armchair, desk, pen, hat, and other articles being kept in their accustomed places and carefully preserved."¹⁰⁵ While house museums had been established across the country, this was the first one in Atlanta.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Washington, D.C. Exhibit and Museum Reviews." *The Public Historian* 25, no. 2 (2003): 101.

¹⁰³ Letter to Lyman Abbot from unnamed URMA secretary. Oct. 23, 1908. Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Ga.

¹⁰⁴ "Recommend Wrens Nest, Uncle Remus' Old Home for Memorial to Him." *Atlanta Georgian and News*, July 15, 1908

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Susan B Deaver. *The Architecture of the Wren's Nest: A Social History*. Accessed November 1984. Paper submitted to Dr. Robert Craig, Georgia Institute of Technology for Architecture 4207. 6. The Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Ga.

The plan for the proposed memorial site in 1908 included the identification of three of his children's houses on adjoining lots.¹⁰⁷ URMA saw the importance of the familiar geographical relationship as it "adds interest to the proposed memorial of their illustrious father."¹⁰⁸ In February of 1909, URMA published updates in the local newspapers with additions to the previous plans. URMA worked through 1913 to raise enough money to purchase the house. Newspapers reported that the anticipated cost of the house would be \$25,000 with an additional \$5,000 needed for renovations.¹⁰⁹ The association advertised in local and national newspapers. The president of URMA, Mrs. A. McD. Wilson, wrote in the *Atlanta Georgian and News* in 1910 that this fundraising effort would be a worldwide movement. "It is expected that donations will come from everywhere to help establish a memorial to one of the world's gifted authors."¹¹⁰ Donations did indeed come. His close friends Theodore Roosevelt and Andrew Carnegie each donated \$5,000 to the effort. Roosevelt gave his time in addition to his money for the cause when he spoke at a fundraising rally hosted by URMA, resulting in a dramatic increase in donations from \$3,000 prior to his address to \$7,500 after.¹¹¹ Soon-to-be President William Howard Taft accepted "with pleasure" to serve as a vice president within the Association, as did future

¹⁰⁷ "Recommend Wrens Nest, Uncle Remus' Old Home for Memorial to Him." *Atlanta Georgian and News*, July 15, 1908. 16.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ "To Complete Funds by December 9 is Desired" *Atlanta Georgian and News*, October 10, 1910

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

President Woodrow Wilson.¹¹² In an effort to engage with the readership of the Uncle Remus stories, URMA created positions of Auxiliary Members within their society.¹¹³ Anyone who donated 25 cents a year could claim this honorary title. This could allow citizens across the country, regardless of financial circumstance, to become involved in the preservation of a property that would honor a man whose stories they and their children cherished.

By the end of 1912, URMA was close to their fundraising goal, and it had been decided by the Superintendent of the Georgia Department of Education that schools statewide would take a few minutes from their scheduled lessons to have a special lesson on Joel Chandler Harris in honor of his birthday on December 9.¹¹⁴ The Association knew that this would not directly bring in funds, as no solicitations would be taken at schools, but it was thought that this would inspire conversations with parents that might result in contributions to the nearly completed project.¹¹⁵ URMA purchased the property on January 13, 1913 and the deed was officially transferred at that time in a ceremony held at the Wren's Nest.¹¹⁶

¹¹² "Acceptance Letter," William Howard Taft to J. L. Lester, September 14th, 1908, The Wren's Nest Archives, Atlanta, Georgia; URMA 1914 Annual Report, Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Georgia

¹¹³ "Mrs. Wilson Asks for Auxiliary Members" *Atlanta Georgian and News*, February 27, 1909

¹¹⁴ "Joel Chandler Harris Birthday Memorial Plans." William M. Slaton to The Superintendents of City Systems of Public Schools in Georgia. September 12, 1908. Wren's Nest Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹⁵ "Uncle Remus birthday to be celebrated by Schools of Georgia" *Weekly Banner*, Athens, Ga, December 6, 1912

¹¹⁶ Walter M. "Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris." 344.

A stipulation to the sale of the house to URMA was the family's wish for Harris's bedroom to be preserved, and that it would remain so in perpetuity.¹¹⁷ Part of this deed read:

Having been chartered and organized for the sole purpose of establishing a perpetual memorial to honor and perpetuate the memory of Joel Chandler Harris, and the property herein being conveyed for the purpose and with the object of having the home place of Joel Chandler Harris preserved as such perpetual memorial, it is hereby conveyed by all parties of this conveyance that the property herein described will be preserved and used as such memorial.¹¹⁸

Management

URMA President Mrs. A. McD. Wilson also served as the first Vice President of the Georgia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC).¹¹⁹ One room, Harris's bedroom, was planned to be kept as a memorial to Uncle Remus although there appear to have been some minor modifications over time.¹²⁰ Similarly, the intent was for another room to be available for use by the UDC, Colonial Dames, and the Daughters of the American Revolution as a way to store and display "treasures without a home."¹²¹ It was planned that the remainder of the house would be open as a library to the West End, a function the Wren's Nest served from 1913 to 1930, when at that time the books became too heavy for the house and

¹¹⁷ Sue Gilman, "Interview with Executive Director of the Wren's Nest," In person interview by author, October 27, 2016.

¹¹⁸ Deed of House, Mrs. Harris to The Uncle Remus Memorial Association, 1913, Atlanta, Georgia, Deed Book 1890: 257, Fulton County Clerk's Office, Courthouse.

¹¹⁹ Mattie B Sheibley. "Georgia Division." *Confederate Veteran*, Volume 26. 1918. 412.

¹²⁰ Swindell, Melissa. *Additional Information*. March 2018. Comment on earlier draft

¹²¹ "Mrs. Wilson Asks for Auxiliary Members" *Atlanta Georgian and News*, February 27, 1909

they were moved to the West End Library on People's Street.¹²² According to minutes from a 1915 meeting "there are over 1,000 members of this library... and look at the guest book and see names from nearly every state in the union... We may be glad we have such an attraction in the South."¹²³

Further collaborations commenced with the women's war memorial associations. The UDC hosted teas and other social events for regional conferences at the Wren's Nest. As evidence of this prominent role of the UDC, the house museum has in its archival collection membership applications submitted for the Children of the Confederacy (COC).¹²⁴ The COC was dedicated to instructing children with a catechism following the ideals of "The Lost Cause," a constructed collective memory that perpetuated the myths of the "War of Northern Aggression" as a noble cause against an invading northern army.¹²⁵ Examples of the teachings of the COC included the instruction of a developed Confederate catechism comprised of questions and responses to introduce the beliefs of the group.¹²⁶ One such question from a 1929 Catechism was: "What did the South fight for?" The answer provided for this question was the only one in all capitulations for the twenty questions. The

¹²² URMA Minutes from 1950, no month/day provided. The Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Georgia

¹²³ URMA Minutes from 1915. The Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Georgia

¹²⁴ The COC, a junior extension of the UDC was open to boys and girls through the age of 18 with direct lineal descendants of men and women who served the Confederacy.

¹²⁵ Amy Lynn Heyse. "The Rhetoric of Memory-Making: Lessons from the UDC's Catechisms for Children." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2008): 408.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40232600>.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

response was: "IT FOUGHT TO REPEL INVASION AND FOR SELF GOVERNMENT, JUST AS THE FATHERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION HAD DONE."¹²⁷

After URMA purchased the property, there appears to be little information in local newspapers as to the activities of the Association beyond notices for monthly meetings at the House, but records from minutes do indicate that the House was open for tours at this time.¹²⁸ An annual celebration that began in 1909, the May Day festival continued to take place in the "meadows" on the property.¹²⁹ The festival functioned both as a fundraiser for the Museum and ensured the grounds of the Wren's Nest were maintained.¹³⁰

Song of the South

In 1939, Walt Disney purchased the rights to the *Uncle Remus* stories for \$10,000 from the Harris estate, as the Disney corporation recognized the popularity that the stories had enjoyed since publication, a half century prior.¹³¹ By giving permission to Disney, it was the Harris children's intent to ensure their father's books would gain popularity with a new generation of fans, and that "the gain would be both theirs [the stories] and the public's."¹³² Production was halted by the

¹²⁷ Lyon Gardiner Tyler. *A Confederate Catechism*, Third Edition, Charles City County, Virginia November 21, 1929. 5. <http://www.scv.org/pdf/ConfederateCatechism.pdf>

¹²⁸ URMA Minutes from 1913 through 1958. The Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Georgia

¹²⁹ Legend of the May Festival of the Wren's Nest Brochure, author unknown. Wren's Nest Archives, Atlanta, Ga.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Brasch, *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the "Cornfield Journalist": The tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 274.

¹³² *Song of the South: World Premier Brochure*. Atlanta, GA: Disney, 1946.

Taken from the *Welcome* section written by Joel Chandler Harris Jr.

Second World War, but began in 1945.¹³³ The movie, entitled *Song of the South*, was released in 1946. The story follows a young white boy, Johnny, who befriends an older, former slave, Uncle Remus. Uncle Remus' stories help the boy navigate his parents' separation while Johnny moves with his mother to her family's plantation. The movie was visually innovative. It was the first movie to mix animation (30%) and live action (70%).¹³⁴ The film followed the traditional Disney format of telling stories through song, winning the Academy Award for best song, *Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah*.¹³⁵ James Baskett, the actor who portrayed Uncle Remus and sang *Zip-a-Dee-Do-Dah*, was presented with an Honorary Academy Award for his portrayal of Remus, giving him the distinction of being the first African American male to receive an Oscar.¹³⁶ His co-star, Hattie McDaniel, had been given the honor of being the first African American female to win the Best Supporting Actress category seven years earlier for her portrayal of Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*.¹³⁷

Song of the South received mixed reviews from both African American and white audiences, and only ranked 23rd among films released in that same period.¹³⁸ Film and media professor Jason Sperb suggests that this post-World War II audience had more progressive views regarding race than existed when the movie was first

¹³³ *Song of the South: World Premier Brochure*. Atlanta, GA: Disney, 1946.

Taken from the *Welcome* section written by Joel Chandler Harris Jr.

¹³⁴ Brasch, *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the "Cornfield Journalist": The tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 276.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 278.

¹³⁶ Neal Gabler. *Walt Disney: The triumph of the American imagination*. (New York, NY: Knopf, 2008.) 432.

¹³⁷ "McDaniel Wins Oscar." History.com. Accessed April 02, 2018.

<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/mcdaniel-wins-oscar>.

¹³⁸ Jason Sperb. *Disney's Most Notorious Film: Race, Convergence, and the Hidden Histories of Song of the South*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013. 6.

planned, and that the stereotypes presented in the film's characters were outdated by the time it was produced.¹³⁹ While Disney himself called the film "a monument to the Negro race," in a statement to the American press in November 1947, Walter White, the Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) said the following: "This production helps to perpetuate a dangerously glorified picture of slavery. Making use of the beautiful Uncle Remus folklore, *Song of the South* unfortunately gives the impression of an idyllic master-slave relationship which is a distortion of the facts."¹⁴⁰ The principal screenwriter, Clarence Muse, an African American writer who was hired specifically for this project, criticized Uncle Remus and Aunt Tempy's characterizations as overtly stereotypical.¹⁴¹ However, his views were ignored by Disney and he chose to resign rather than continue supporting the film.¹⁴² Furthermore, at the film's Atlanta premiere, the actors who portrayed Remus and Tempy, James Baskett and Hattie McDaniel, were not allowed to stay in the same hotel as white cast members due to Georgia strictly enforcing legal segregation.¹⁴³ Baskett and McDaniel were also denied entrance to functions hosted by URMA.¹⁴⁴ In 1947 Walt Disney, his wife, and select guests were invited to the Wren's Nest by URMA for tea to celebrate the

¹³⁹ Sperb. *Disney's Most Notorious Film: Race, Convergence, and the Hidden Histories of Song of the South*. 6, 7, 13.

¹⁴⁰ Telegram from Walter White, NAACP executive secretary, to American newspapers, 27 November 1946. Referenced in pg. 280 of Walter M. Brasch, *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the "Cornfield Journalist": The tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000.)

¹⁴¹ Brasch, *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the "Cornfield Journalist": The tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. 279.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Sperb. *Disney's Most Notorious Film: Race, Convergence, and the Hidden Histories of Song of the South*. 63

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

release of the movie.¹⁴⁵ The house still has in its possession many items of memorabilia related to the film such as stuffed animals, signed brochures by Walt Disney, a lifesize Br'er Bear cutout, and photos from the premiere.¹⁴⁶ These artifacts serve as reminders of the connection that exists between the movie and the House. Inequality, both within the film and in the reality in which it was debuted, had tarnished the reputation of Harris and the stories he so loved, thirty-eight years after his death.¹⁴⁷

Physical Changes

Under URMA's management, there were few physical changes to the property. In 1924, the house was rewired electrically to meet modern standards, and in 1933, an Author's Walk was installed.¹⁴⁸ This Walk, still surrounding the front and side of the house, is made of large, irregularly shaped granite stones engraved with famous authors' names. The Walk was also a fundraising and outreach effort.¹⁴⁹ No further information regarding these alterations was found.

¹⁴⁵ Invitation to Disney tea hosted at the Wren's Nest November 12, 1947, The Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Georgia

¹⁴⁶ Various site visits by the author from October 2017 through January 2018.

¹⁴⁷ *Song of the South: World Premier Brochure*. Atlanta, GA: Disney, 1946.

Taken from the *Welcome* section written by Joel Chandler Harris Jr.

¹⁴⁸ Greene, W. Lane. *Comprehensive Planning Study: The Wren's Nest for The Joel Chandler Harris Association*. Atlanta, Georgia January 19, 1986. From the Records of W. Lane Greene in the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Athens, Georgia.

¹⁴⁹ Authors Wall Request Letter for Charles Henry Smith, Bill Arp. To president of the Arp society from Mrs. H. G. Hastings Date Unknown. Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Ga.

Joel Chandler Harris Memorial Association (1958-1983)

Fundraising

No specific information was found regarding new fund raising activities during this era.

Management

In 1958, the Uncle Remus Memorial Association was changed to the Joel Chandler Harris Memorial Association (JCHMA).¹⁵⁰ Despite changing names, the newly-named association functioned much the same as its predecessor. The Wren's Nest continued to be open for tours and hosted the May Day celebrations every spring.¹⁵¹ The segregation that appeared to be in place with URMA was more apparent under JCHMA. The West End was transitioning from an upper-middle-class white neighborhood to a lower-middle-class African American neighborhood.¹⁵² A former executive director of the Wren's Nest, in an interview, provided an account of an experience that a then current docent had shared with her. The docent recalled as a child being chased off the front porch by one of the women in the Association as she was called "nigger."¹⁵³ This anecdote is just one of many that is representative of the segregated structure that enveloped life in the South.

¹⁵⁰ Susan B Deaver. *The Architecture of the Wren's Nest: A Social History*. Accessed November 1984. Paper submitted to Dr. Robert Craig, Georgia Institute of Technology for Architecture 4207. 8. The Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Ga.

¹⁵¹ Minutes and May Day Brochures 1958-1983. The Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁵² National Register of Historic Places, West End Historic District, Atlanta, Fulton, Georgia, 97000612. 6.

¹⁵³ Sue Gilman, "Interview with Executive Director of the Wren's Nest," In person interview by author, October 27, 2016.

Leading up to 1967, direct evidence supporting abject segregation of the Wren's Nest was recorded in several newspaper reports.¹⁵⁴ On October 6, 1967, Rev. Clyde Williams and three children were denied entry to the museum by the JCHMA because of their race.¹⁵⁵ Williams went to the Wren's Nest in order to be turned away so as to spotlight this known transgression.¹⁵⁶ He said, "I understand that they will not let us in, but if they do not I will prepare an action against them to ensure that particular policy is removed from their books." Rev. Williams filed suit on grounds of violation of the Thirteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Association hired attorney William G. McRae.¹⁵⁷ His services were secured through at least a \$500 fee that is recorded in JCHMA meeting minutes.¹⁵⁸ JCHMA responded by writing a motion to US District Judge Newell Edenfield to dismiss the case.¹⁵⁹ The Association's interpretation of the Thirteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act allowed them, as a private organization, to selectively choose who could enter. The President of JCHMA, Mrs. L. W. Bradley, gave the following statement at the time of the lawsuit. "This [segregation] has been the policy since the beginning and some of the women feel it is tradition and we should

¹⁵⁴ "Clement Charges Wren's Nest Bias." *Atlanta Constitution*, July 13, 1966.

¹⁵⁵ William B. Williams, "Wren's Nest Asks Judge to Drop Suit," *Atlanta Journal Constitution* December 8, 1967.

¹⁵⁶ "Wren's Nest Race Policy Faces Test" Newspaper clipping of unknown source. The Wren's Nest Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁵⁷ "Renew Court Attack on Wren's Nest." *The Atlanta Constitution*. Atlanta, Ga. [Atlanta, Ga] 13 June 1968: 27.

¹⁵⁸ Uncle Remus Memorial Association Minutes 1968-1975 Book. The Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Georgia. Accessed by author 11.21.17

¹⁵⁹ "Renew Court Attack on Wren's Nest." *The Atlanta Constitution*. Atlanta, Ga. [Atlanta, Ga] 13 June 1968: 27.

stick to it.”¹⁶⁰ Judge Edenfield denied this motion by the Association on March 13, 1968.¹⁶¹

On May 11, 1968 a special meeting of the Association was called to order to confer with McRae. “The purpose of the meeting was to meet with our lawyer so he can tell us in detail what we can or cannot do in regard to Civil Rights and Interstate Commerce Act.”¹⁶² The Commerce Clause, a section of the Thirteenth Amendment, had been interpreted with regard to the Civil Rights Act to mean that private businesses could not discriminate against African American customers. This was ultimately what Judge Edenfield used to rule in favor of Rev. Williams. On September 28, 1968 the *Atlanta Constitution* reported that Judge Edenfield’s decision was based on the fact that the contents of the house could cause people to travel from out of state, thus the Interstate Commerce Clause applied, and the Wren’s Nest was therefore considered to be “a place of public accommodation under the 1964 Civil Rights Act.”¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ “Segregation of Wren’s Nest Protested by Negro Educator.” *Atlanta Journal Constitution* July 12, 1966.

¹⁶¹ “Wren’s Nest Rights Suit Is Sustained,” *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, March 13, 1968.

¹⁶² Uncle Remus Memorial Association Minutes 1968-1975 Book, Pg. insert loose leaf, May 11, 1968. Accessed by author 11.21.17.

¹⁶³ “Wren’s Nest Ordered Integrated.” *Atlanta Journal Constitution* September 28th, 1968.



Figure 3: Undated Signs from Jim Crow Era Management. The Wren's Nest archives, Atlanta, Georgia. Photo by author.

The following minutes from September 10, 1968 give the most detail relating to the case from the perspective of the women in the organization at the time.

The purpose of the meeting was to have our lawyer Mr. McRae explain our rights about admitting negroes to the Wren's nest. He explained that beginning Mon. Sept. 23 we will have to admit negroes according to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Admit as many as possible at the same time... We have the right to ask for protection from the city, county, and state... It [the suite] (sic) was filed in now with the expectation by winning the suit but Mr. McRae admitted defeat and was sorry. The 5th circuit court of appeals had to uphold the Supreme Court decision. Don't discuss court order with whites or blacks and don't employ colored hostesses unless we care to.

Three weeks later during the October 1, 1968 meeting of JCHMA, the following closure on the matter was stated. "President, Mrs. McGahee, gave report

on loss of integration suite (sic), stating the home is now fully integrated.”¹⁶⁴ This “loss” in their minds, allowed for African Americans to visit the home as it existed as a house museum for the first time as patrons with equal access. While the law may have changed, the women who were in charge of the organization still were the same and held the same beliefs that led to the suit being filed in the first place. A folder with four old cardboard signs (Figure 3) reading “No Integrated Classes Admitted” can be found in the archives at the Wren’s Nest, a testament to the past policies enforced under JCHMA.¹⁶⁵

After the forced integration, news reports related to the Wren’s Nest declined.¹⁶⁶ Not much can be found on reports from the house during this time other than the occasional article detailing the way that the city and state as a whole had dealt with the issue, primarily by ignoring it.¹⁶⁷

Song of the South (Third Release)

In 1972, Disney chose to re-release *Song of the South* again in theatres following an intended permanent withdrawal of the movie just two years earlier.¹⁶⁸ This was the most successful re-release for Disney at the time, despite protests and criticism that had emerged from the second release in 1956.¹⁶⁹ Prior to home video

¹⁶⁴ Minutes 1968-1975 Book, Pg. 19, October 1, 1968. Accessed by author 11.21.17.

¹⁶⁵ The Wren’s Nest Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁶⁶ Searches of the Constitution Records, the Journal records, and the Wren’s Nest Archives produced no more news regarding integration.

¹⁶⁷ Ron Taylor, “Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit Survive Thorny Issue.” *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, November 9, 1975.

¹⁶⁸ Brasch “Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the ‘Cornfield Journalist’: The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris.” 281.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

technology, Disney released their films every six or seven years in theatres to ensure that new generations of children would grow up with their stories. It is worth noting that had this schedule been followed, a re-release of the film would have occurred around 1964. It is probable that this decision to not release the film corresponds to the social movements of the era, particularly the passage of the Civil Rights Act.¹⁷⁰ The timing of the 1972 release corresponds to a more conservative, post-civil rights era in which the film has been considered to serve as nostalgia for a “pre-civil rights utopia.”¹⁷¹

It is unknown if JCHMA participated in any of these re-releases, but considering the relationship that the House and URMA had with the original release, this is worthy of note. Despite the 1972 re-release and its success, by 1975 news reports related how modern generations of students were largely unaware of who Joel Chandler Harris or Uncle Remus were.¹⁷² Even those who attended schools or serviced libraries named after him or his muse were unaware of the Georgian literary giant who, only a generation before, had still been a household name.¹⁷³

Physical Changes

There is no evidence of any significant physical changes to the property between 1946 to 1984.

¹⁷⁰ Sperb. *Disney's Most Notorious Film: Race, Convergence, and the Hidden Histories of Song of the South*. 16.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁷² Ron Taylor, “Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit Survive Thorny Issue.” *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, November 9, 1975.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

Joel Chandler Harris Association (1983 - Present)

Fundraising

Fundraising efforts are discussed in the Physical Changes section below as they all relate directly to the restoration efforts undertaken.

Management

In 1983, the JCHMA was disbanded and the current 501 (C) (3) non-profit institution, The Joel Chandler Harris Association (JCHA), was created.¹⁷⁴ A new board of directors was established, the role of executive director was created, and through these actions, the private nature of the prior organizations and their management styles was terminated.¹⁷⁵ A report published in 1984 stated that “Also part of this new movement is a twenty-four member board consisting of whites *and* blacks, which is in direct, albeit delayed, response to eradicating the racial discrimination which unfortunately occurred.”¹⁷⁶

It was only after this previous group was disbanded that any sort of reparations, including de facto integration for the first time, was made. The change in name was intentional according to The Wren’s Nest’s Executive Director Melissa Swindell, “to identify that we are a separate organization and that the things that they were doing in the past are not necessarily what our organization is about today.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Deaver. *The Architecture of the Wren's Nest: A Social History*. 8.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Melissa Swindell, “WN History Interview.” Interview by Rebekah T. Helfgot. October 15, 2017. The Wrens’s Nest, Atlanta, Georgia.

In July 2006, Lain Shakespeare, a great-great-great grandson of Joel Chandler Harris, was hired as director during what he calls “desperate times” for the museum.¹⁷⁸ The Wren’s Nest was a year’s worth of expenditures in debt and the museum was suffering from a lack of visitors.¹⁷⁹ The Wren’s Nest was in jeopardy of closing and was listed as one of Georgia’s most endangered historic sites.¹⁸⁰ The progress that was initiated through the creation of literary programs, a storytelling festival, and seeking partnerships within the West End (to be discussed in Chapter 5) stalled somewhat during the Great Recession (2007-2009), but the museum was able to ride out the dwindling contributions thanks to the steps taken in the years prior to the economic decline.¹⁸¹

The tours that had been in existence since the establishment of the museum continued, and to supplement this, a storytelling program was created in 1985.¹⁸² This program drew from the tradition of storytelling and oral history exhibited in the books by Harris through the character of Uncle Remus. In 2006, a summer program for high school students interested in journalism was created, and in 2010 a middle school mentor-based writing program began. This program, the Scribes Program, was created by the Wren’s Nest to help children in the community improve their writing skills through fiction and non-fiction writing under the

¹⁷⁸ Lain Shakespeare “WN History Interview.” Interview by Rebekah T. Helfgot. October Date, 2017. Ponce City Market, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Cate Doty. "Rehabilitating Uncle Remus (and His House in Atlanta)." *The New York Times*. July 01, 2007. Accessed April 02, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/01/us/01remus.html>.

¹⁸¹ Lain Shakespeare “WN History Interview.” Interview by Rebekah T. Helfgot. October Date, 2017. Ponce City Market, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁸² Ibid.

direction of a one-on-one mentor-student partnership.¹⁸³ The program is fully funded by grants and individual contributions made to the Wren's Nest. Mentors volunteer their time for one afternoon each week for twelve weeks, where they foster young writers' abilities. The Scribes Program was adapted from a non-profit, 826, a national writing program that was developed in New York in 2002 by Dave Eggers and Nínive Calegari.¹⁸⁴ The program 826 is focused on Student, Mentor, and Community growth through the "power of writing."¹⁸⁵

The Scribes Program has been working with KIPP Strive Academy, a Public Charter School in the West End, since the start of the program where mentors provide assistance to fifth through eighth graders.¹⁸⁶ After four years, in 2014, Scribes expanded and now includes Brown Middle School, located near the Wren's Nest, where the eighth graders have the opportunity to participate. At the end of the twelve weeks a party is held at the Wren's Nest where the students are able to showcase their work, have a tour of the home, and see what the Museum does. At the end of each semester-long program the students' works are compiled, edited, and printed into a book. The books premiere each year at the Decatur Book Festival, a local festival that takes place every summer. In the nine years that the Scribes Program has been active at the two schools, over 130 students have completed it.

¹⁸³ Kalin Thomas. "Scribes Program Interview." Interview by Rebekah T. Helfgot. January 10, 2018, The Wrens's Nest, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁸⁴ "About." 826 National. Accessed January 13, 2018. <https://826national.org/about/>.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Kalin Thomas. "Scribes Program Interview." Interview by Rebekah T. Helfgot. January 10, 2018, The Wrens's Nest, Atlanta, Georgia.

The first class of Scribes entered college in fall 2017, and efforts are being made to reach out to them to ascertain the program's impact.

The first writers program organized by the Wren's Nest began in 2006 and operated for ten years. It was the Optimist Review High School Program and was offered during summer months. This program was modeled after Harris's journey in journalism as a teenage typesetter and editor. Students interested in journalism were presented the opportunity, through site visits and lectures at the Wren's Nest, to learn about the journalism profession. The program was ultimately disbanded in 2017 due to lack of student registration. However, the Wren's Nest is looking forward to eventually reestablishing the program should enough students indicate interest.¹⁸⁷

Additional standing programming includes Beyond Books, a monthly book discussion that is free and open to the public.¹⁸⁸ This event is sponsored through a partnership with Literary Atlanta, a podcast that is devoted to telling the stories of southern literature and authors.¹⁸⁹ Other sponsored annual events include Phoenix Flies, a month-long event that schedules free access to historic sites in Atlanta, the Wren's Nest Included.¹⁹⁰ Jazz Matters, a non-profit dedicated to jazz education and performance, has partnered with the Wren's Nest for the past three years and has

¹⁸⁷ Melissa Swindell, *Comment on Earlier Submitted Draft*. March 2018.

¹⁸⁸ Melissa Swindell. "Second Meeting." Interview by author. April 4, 2018. Conducted at Crema: Espresso Gourmet. Dunwoody, Georgia.

¹⁸⁹ "About." Literary Atlanta - a Podcast Hosted by Alison Law for the Reader, Writer, Book Lover, and Lit-curious. December 31, 2017. Accessed April 16, 2018. <http://literaryatlanta.com/about/>.

¹⁹⁰ Kalin Thomas. *2018 Schedule*. January 2, 2018. Wren's Nest Instagram Account. In *Instagram*. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BddTL3rjU7c/?taken-by=wrensnestatl>

year round events either in the house or the grounds depending on season and weather.¹⁹¹

The response by the local neighborhood association, the West End Neighborhood Development (WEND), regarding the House is positive. Current President of WEND, Marquis McNeal, said “Wren’s Nest is a staple in the neighborhood and as long as I have been here [since 2013] they have been great neighbors.”¹⁹² McNeal also highlighted the Scribes Program, Beyond Books, and Jazz Matters series as engaging and educational programs.¹⁹³

Physical Changes

The 1980s and 1990s were focused on stabilizing the house from a structural perspective. Information from minutes recorded throughout the decades as well as letters from visitors provide details on updates to the house.

Architect W. Lane Greene and his team were hired in the fall of 1984 by the Board of Directors of the Wren’s Nest for what Greene called a “challenging and significant project.”¹⁹⁴ Greene was a prominent restoration architect based in Atlanta who restored many local landmarks in and around the city.¹⁹⁵ His analysis of

¹⁹¹ "2018 Summer Concert Lineup." Jazz Matters, Inc. Accessed April 16, 2018. <https://www.yesjazzmatters.org/jazz-matters-the-wrens-nest/>.

¹⁹² McNeal, Marquis "Tony". "WEND Questions Response." E-mail message to author. April 10, 2018.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ "Professional Services Contract." W. Lane Greene to Laura Waller. February 20, 1984. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, W. Lane Greene Architectural Records Box, Athens, Georgia.

¹⁹⁵ *Biographic/Historic Note: Finding Aid*. From the Records of W. Lane Greene in the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Athens, Georgia.

the Wren's Nest provided an architectural history that had been lacking as well as a three-part plan on how to rehabilitate the museum.¹⁹⁶ The first phase was updating electrical, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), and water systems. The second phase would involve landscape improvement, replacing the asphalt roofing with period appropriate cedar shingles, porch restoration of rotten wooden elements, and development of the basement. Greene proposed that the basement be converted into an orientation space for schools or other large tour groups. Phase three would see the completion of exterior and interior renovations and furniture renovation.¹⁹⁷

Renovations started immediately; however, based on the suggestions he proposed, the work was never finished. The basement is currently unfinished and used as storage. As documents from both the architect and the Wren's Nest stated, the money was being raised concurrent with the renovations, and as full funding was not met, certain elements, like the renovated basement, appear to have been cut from the plan.¹⁹⁸

In 1985, the *Atlanta Constitution* received an inquiry from Ellis Arnall, a former Governor of Georgia, after he and his wife had been surprised by the poor state of the house on a recent visit.¹⁹⁹ "It is quite dilapidated and badly needs

¹⁹⁶ W. Lane Greene, *Comprehensive Planning Study: The Wren's Nest for The Joel Chandler Harris Association*. Atlanta, Georgia January 19, 1986. From the Records of W. Lane Greene in the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Athens, Georgia.

¹⁹⁷ Laura Waller, comp. "Architect's Study." *The Wren's Nest Newsletter* (Spring 1984): 2. Joel Chandler Harris Association.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ "Wren's Nest Inquiry." Ellis Gibbs Arnall to The Editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. July 23, 1985. Wren's Nest Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

restorative work, painting, and repairs. Joel Chandler Harris's home could be made into a great tourist attraction."²⁰⁰ This reached the desk of Tom Teepen, Editor at the newspaper and board member of the JCHA. He responded that the Association had hired a restoration architect, W. Lane Greene, and that a plan was in place for the House.²⁰¹ A fundraising plan was also in effect to raise the \$350,000 total amount needed by the architect to restore the building and the grounds. According to Teepen, the House had already installed modern plumbing and electrical wiring, but the other renovations were put on hold until the remaining money was raised.²⁰² Fundraising examples of this campaign included the Jack Daniels' sponsorship to provide funds from sales to the restoration campaign. This was done under a partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the largest organization for preservation in the United States.²⁰³ This campaign, "Celebrating the Best of America" was part of a larger national donation effort by Jack Daniels that also assisted historic places like Faneuil Hall in Boston, the Scott Joplin home in St. Louis, and Jubilee Hall in Nashville. ²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ "Wren's Nest Inquiry." Ellis Gibbs Arnall to The Editor of the Atlanta Constitution. July 23, 1985. Wren's Nest Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰¹ Martha Woodham. "Restoration Begins at Wren's Nest." *The Atlanta Journal*, February 22, 1985.


²⁰² "Wren's Nest Inquiry Response." Tom Teepen to Ellis Gibbs Arnall. July 25, 1985. Wren's Nest Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰³ Jack Daniels. " Help Jack Daniels Fix up Br'er Rabbit's Birthplace." Advertisement. *Atlanta Journal*, July 2, 1985, 8.

²⁰⁴ Michael Kammen. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1993. 674.

Atlanta Journal Constitution 7/2/85 page 8A

HELP JACK DANIEL'S FIX UP BR'ER RABBIT'S BIRTHPLACE.



With every purchase of Jack Daniel's made this month, a contribution will be made for the further restoration of the Wren's Nest, the Atlanta home of Joel Chandler Harris, the man who retold the tales of Uncle Remus to all the world.

For somebody who lived in a briar patch, Br'er Rabbit did all right for himself. He and all the other Uncle Remus characters are known the world over. And they made Georgia author and journalist Joel Chandler Harris famous, too.

Today The Wren's Nest, Harris' Atlanta home, belongs to all Atlanta. But The Wren's Nest could use a nest egg to complete its restoration.

Jack Daniel's now invites you to join with our Atlanta distributor and retailers and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to help restore this important literary landmark.

For every purchase of Jack Daniel's made this month, a contribution will be made to the Wren's Nest.

Look for the special display at participating retailers. And help Jack Daniel's give the Wren's Nest a "happily ever after" ending.

**CELEBRATING THE BEST
OF AMERICA**
National Trust for Historic Preservation

© 1985 Jack Daniel's Distillers, Inc. Route 1, Lynchburg (Pop. 261), Tennessee 37532

Figure 4: Jack Daniels Fundraising Advertisement in the Atlanta Journal Constitution, July 2, 1985 page 8A. Photo by Author. The Wren's Nest Archives, Atlanta, Georgia



Figure 5: First Issue of the Wren's Nest Newsletter, Spring 1984.
The Wren's Nest Archives, Atlanta, Georgia. Photo by Author

In the past decade the Wren's Nest has completed several rehabilitation campaigns, with the most recent totaling over \$200,000 dollars, a statement on their improving financial stability.²⁰⁵ The majority of the current funding comes from grants with about a third of the operating budget supplied from earned income such as tour and entrance tickets to the museum.²⁰⁶

This chapter provides information on the occupancy of the Wren's Nest post-Harris, the changes to the residence as a physical place over time, the change in management over time, and past actions within the community.

²⁰⁵ "Our Story | The Wren's Nest." The Wrens Nest RSS. Accessed April 06, 2018. http://www.wrensnest.org/support_member.php.

²⁰⁶ *Your Impact Leaflet*. 2013. The Wren's Nest Fundraising Folder.

CHAPTER 4

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

This chapter will provide contextual information about the cultural and geographic landscape in which the Wren’s Nest resides. General histories of both Atlanta and the West End are provided. Information about Atlanta will be provided first, followed by specific information about the West End.

Atlanta History Overview

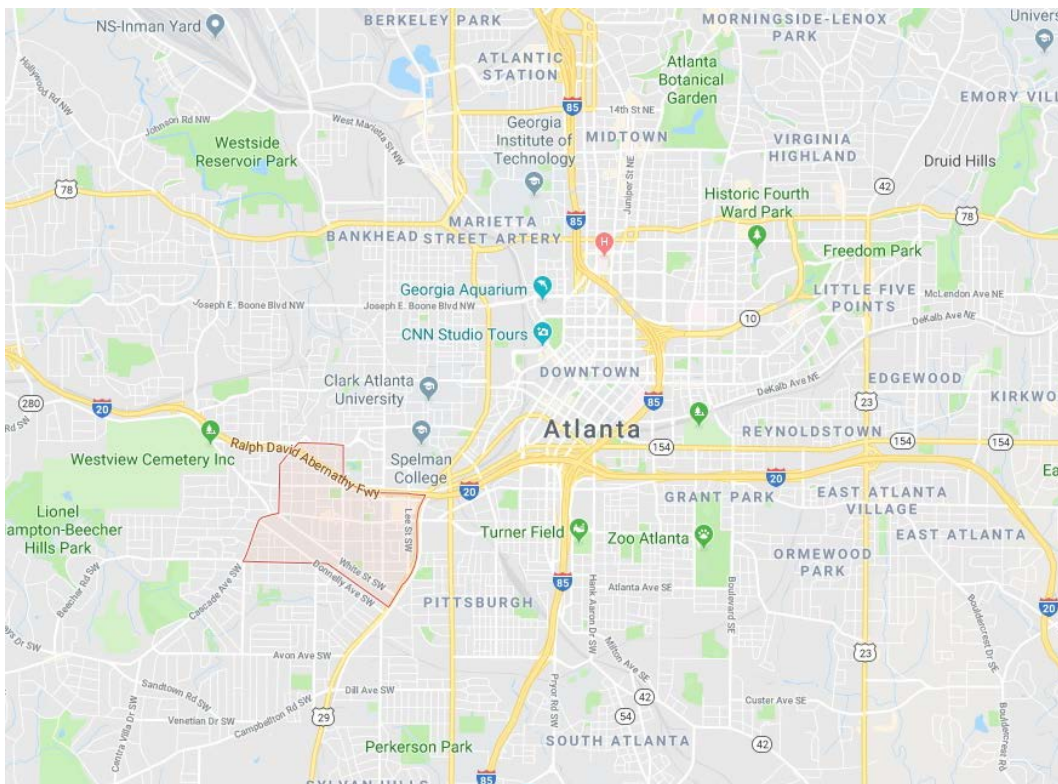


Figure 6: Atlanta, West End Context Map

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/West+End,+Atlanta,+GA+30310/@33.7376738,-84.433703,15z>

Although it is currently the capital of Georgia, and the ninth largest city in the United States, Atlanta was never a planned city. Unlike Savannah, which was heavily planned, Atlanta developed from an intersection of railroad lines.²⁰⁷ Geographically, Atlanta is near the base of the Appalachian Piedmont. Prior to European colonization, the land was home to the Creek and Cherokee Nations.²⁰⁸ From 1763 to 1802 the land that would encompass the future city was transferred to the colony, then state, in a series of land cessions. The core of the future city was developed from four 202.5 acre lots which were subdivided into streets and blocks at the discretion of each developer.²⁰⁹ The center of the city was taken from a platted but still unsettled, section of one of the lots in 1836. This section, named Terminus, was a plain of about twenty acres along the Peachtree Ridge.²¹⁰ Terminus changed names to Marthasville in 1844 and ultimately changed to the current name, Atlanta, in 1847.

Atlanta grew steadily in population from its creation as Terminus. The first census records in 1850 show the population at 2,572 with a 271% increase in the next ten years.²¹¹ The first detailed census of the city in 1860 presents Atlanta as a place that was dominated by the transportation industry. Eighty percent of the population worked in the transportation or manufacturing fields, and the vital role of three railroads that met in the city made it a significant target during the Civil

²⁰⁷ Harley F. Etienne and Barbara Faga, *Planning Atlanta* (Chicago: APA Planners 2014). 14.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 17

²¹⁰ Ibid., 18

²¹¹ Harley F. Etienne and Barbara Faga, *Planning Atlanta*. 30

War.²¹² In 1864, Atlanta was bombed and burned by Union General William T. Sherman's forces as part of their mission to destroy the rail and industry capabilities of the Confederate city.²¹³ After the War, Atlanta rebuilt and expanded. Just outside city limits, new neighborhoods were created and connected to Atlanta via streetcar rail. Known as streetcar suburbs, one such example is Inman Park.²¹⁴ This neighborhood, located directly to the east of the city's boundaries, was founded in 1889 specifically to function as a streetcar suburb. Inman Park was the first neighborhood to use electric, rather than animal-drawn, streetcars.²¹⁵

Early to Mid Twentieth Century Atlanta

Like much of the United States, and the South especially, there was rampant racism and segregation in most aspects of Atlanta life. Institutionalized racism through discriminatory housing practices, work opportunities, and education existed in the city. Blatant violence also occurred. Nationwide throughout the 1890s, a person was lynched, on average, every other day.²¹⁶ From September 22 through September 24, 1906 the city was brought to a standstill by a race riot.²¹⁷ Responding to unsubstantiated claims that four African American men had assaulted white

²¹² Harley F. Etienne and Barbara Faga, *Planning Atlanta*. 20

²¹³ "Civil War in Georgia: Overview." New Georgia Encyclopedia. Accessed April 02, 2018. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/civil-war-georgia-overview>.

²¹⁴ National Register of Historic Places, Inman Park Historic District, Atlanta, Fulton, Georgia, 73000621. 9

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ "Lynchings by Year and Race," University of Missouri Kansas City Law School, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/shipp/lynchingyear.html>

²¹⁷ "Atlanta Race Riot of 1906." New Georgia Encyclopedia. Accessed April 02, 2018. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/atlanta-race-riot-1906>.

women, angry white mobs wreaked havoc on African American neighborhoods, businesses, and property.²¹⁸ It is estimated that between twenty-five to forty African Americans were murdered in the violence despite state militia intervention.²¹⁹ As referenced in Chapter 2, the Harris family hid African Americans in the basement of their home during this riot.

Several landmark edifices were built in Atlanta in the first decades of the century: The Carnegie Library, the city's first public library;²²⁰ the Candler Building, the city's tallest when completed in 1906 and characterized by Beaux-Arts details,²²¹ and Terminal Station. In 1911, the distinguished Old Post Office building, in the Second Renaissance Revival style, was built.²²² Almost 2000 buildings, mostly wooden, were destroyed in the Old Fourth Ward during the 1917 Great Atlanta Fire, leaving 10,000 people homeless, but only one fatality.²²³

While the 1920s were still roaring, the Sears Roebuck building opened, and for the next 60 years was a retail haven. After some years of decline, it is today

²¹⁸ "Atlanta Race Riot of 1906." New Georgia Encyclopedia. Accessed April 02, 2018. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/atlanta-race-riot-1906..>

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ "The Carnegie Library Stones." History Atlanta. October 03, 2014. Accessed April 18, 2018. <http://historyatlanta.com/carnegie-library-stones/>.

²²¹ The Candler Building. Accessed April 18, 2018. <http://www.candlerbuilding.com/history.htm>.

²²² "U.S. Post Office and Courthouse--Atlanta: A National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary." National Parks Service. Accessed April 18, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/atlanta/pos.htm>.

²²³ Becca J. G. Godwin. "100 Years Ago, the Great Atlanta Fire of 1917 Tore through the City." AJC. Accessed April 18, 2018. <https://www.ajc.com/news/local/100-years-ago-the-great-atlanta-fire-1917-tore-through-the-city/Dipf00hkbPS2Jh4CrJLStL/>.

central to the revitalized area known as Ponce City Market.²²⁴ The iconic Fox Theatre opened its doors in 1929, and despite efforts to raze the building in the 1970s, continues to stand as a testament to Atlanta preservation movement.²²⁵

The Temple, a classically-inspired house of Jewish worship, was erected in 1931, and in 1933 the Gothic Revival Art Deco Atlanta City Hall was constructed.²²⁶ The 1930s ended with the Atlanta premiere of *Gone With the Wind* at the historic Lowe's Theatre.²²⁷ The 1940s started with Delta Airlines moving its headquarters to the city.²²⁸ With the onset of World War II, soldiers from the Southeastern U.S. traveled through Atlanta via train, and were later discharged at Fort McPherson, 11 miles southeast of the city center. Train traffic increased to 350 trains per day until the 1950s, driving economic and population growth.²²⁹ Bell Aircraft supported the war effort concurrent with the growth of the city's economy. In 1946, what would become the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was founded in Atlanta.²³⁰

²²⁴ Ponce City Market. Accessed April 18, 2018. <http://www.poncecitymarket.com/our-story/history/>.

²²⁵ Theatre, Fox. "Fox History/Story." Fox Theatre. Accessed April 18, 2018. <https://www.foxtheatre.org/about/fox-historystory>.

²²⁶ "Atlanta City Hall." SAH Archipedia. Accessed April 18, 2018. <http://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/GA-01-121-0061>; "The Temple--Atlanta: A National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary." National Parks Service. Accessed April 18, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/atlanta/tem.htm>.

²²⁷ "Atlanta Premiere of Gone With The Wind." About North Georgia. Accessed April 18, 2018. http://www.aboutnorthgeorgia.com/ang/Atlanta_Premiere_of_Gone_With_The_Wind.

²²⁸ This Day in Georgia History - Delta Moved to Atlanta - GeorgiaInfo. Accessed April 18, 2018. <http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/thisday/gahistory/01/27/delta-moved-to-atlanta>.

²²⁹ "Atlanta Terminal Station." Accessed April 18, 2018. <https://railga.com/Depots/atlterminal.html>.

²³⁰ "About CDC 24-7." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. January 19, 2018. Accessed April 18, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/about/history/index.html>.

In 1952, Atlanta annexed Buckhead and adjacent areas, tripling its area to 130 square miles and numbering 431,314 residents. In response to its Rabbi's support of the growing Civil Rights movement, white supremacists bombed a side of The Temple in 1958. This outrage prompted an outpouring of national and worldwide financial and moral support.²³¹

The Second Half of the Twentieth Century to Today

Atlanta's rapid growth continued through 1960. However, slower growth (two percent) characterized the remainder of the 1960s, as the city was experiencing what many urban centers across America were experiencing—the phenomenon of white flight, the massive departure of whites from city centers during the era of Urban Renewal.²³²

Protests aimed at generations of iniquities took place in Atlanta, among other cities, during the Civil Rights Era. Student sit-ins began in the city in 1960 and were organized by both the Committee on Appeal for Human Rights and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.²³³ Atlanta was the home of Martin Luther King Jr., leader of the Civil Rights Movement in America. His influence cannot be so briefly summarized, but his connection to the city merits inclusion as it shows how

²³¹ "The Temple--Atlanta: A National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary." National Parks Service. Accessed April 18, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/atlanta/tem.htm>.

²³² Harley F. Etienne and Barbara Faga, *Planning Atlanta*. 31; Urban Renewal in the United States (generally 1945-1980) began in the post WWII era in response to the need to upgrade cities, housing, and infrastructure to meet the needs of the population. This was done through the demolition of neighborhoods and historic buildings, most negatively affecting minority communities.

²³³ "Atlanta Sit-ins." New Georgia Encyclopedia. Accessed April 02, 2018. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/atlanta-sit-ins>.

important the city was for the movement towards racial equality. King's home in the Sweet Auburn Neighborhood of the Old Fourth Ward is now a National Historic Site under the direction of the National Park Service to honor and preserve his legacy.²³⁴ An Atlanta native, King graduated from Morehouse College, located in the West End, in 1948, and was ordained as a pastor that same year at his neighborhood and family church, Ebenezer Baptist Church.²³⁵ He lived in the northeast for several years while pursuing his doctoral degree. King successfully led the Birmingham Bus Boycott in 1955 and 1956, and was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Convention (SCLC) in 1957. By 1960, he had moved back to Atlanta as the recognized leader of the Civil Rights Movement. The Sweet Auburn District would become home to the headquarters of the SCLC and the Ebenezer Baptist Church was a landmark for speeches and sermons spreading the words of peace and equality. This major social movement was happening at the same time that the Uncle Remus Memorial Association, followed by the Joel Chandler Harris Memorial Association was in charge of the Wren's Nest, and still practicing overtly segregated policies.

White flight continued during this time period and escalated in the 1970s, where a 14% population drop was recorded as nearly 72,000 adults, or 20% of the white population of Atlanta, left the city to live in the suburbs that were connected

²³⁴ "Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site--Atlanta: A National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary." National Parks Service. Accessed April 02, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/atlanta/kin.htm>.

²³⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site--Atlanta: A National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary." National Parks Service. Accessed April 02, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/atlanta/kin.htm>.

by expanding highway networks. During this period, single-family, in-town formerly white neighborhoods like Kirkwood and Mozley Park transitioned to predominantly middle-class African American neighborhoods. The racial demographics of the city from its founding until today tell the story of a rising African American population percentage; from 20% in 1860, to 40% in 1900, to 51% in 1970. The 1970 census marks the flip in majority demographics for race in the city, and Atlanta has remained majority African American since.²³⁶ However, in the past decade, America has seen an increase in white movement back to cities, and this holds true for Atlanta as well.²³⁷

Development rose rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s, but this occurred mostly outside of Atlanta city limits in the areas near the perimeter highway and the surrounding suburbs.²³⁸ In 1994, the Cobb Galleria, a quarter-million square foot convention center, opened northwest of the city. This placement of the convention center reflected the capital invested in large projects outside of the city. The Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games served as a catalyst for investment within the city.²³⁹ New sports arenas, athlete dormitories, Centennial Olympic Park, and downtown revitalization were projects that influenced private development of new hotels and restaurants in the city.²⁴⁰ Centennial Olympic Park alone, has contributed to over \$1.8 billion in hotels, restaurants, office buildings, and residential units.²⁴¹ In 2005,

²³⁶ Harley F. Etienne and Barbara Faga, *Planning Atlanta*. 32.

²³⁷ Stephanie Meeks and Kevin C. Murphy. *The Past and Future City: How Historic Preservation Is Reviving Americas Communities*. Island Pr, 2016.

²³⁸ Harley F. Etienne and Barbara Faga, *Planning Atlanta*. 287.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 222.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 230.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

Atlantic Station, a 138-acre brownfield redevelopment site within city limits, was opened.²⁴² Planned at the same time that the Cobb Galleria opened, Atlantic Station implemented multi-use developments that encouraged a return to city living.²⁴³

The Atlanta BeltLine was proposed in 1999 by Ryan Gravel for his master's thesis at the Georgia Institute of Technology. An Atlanta native, Gravel saw the abandoned railway corridors that encompassed the city as a possible way to create a pedestrian and bike friendly path to connect the dozens of historic neighborhoods in the city. He was also inspired by the 1992 master-plan developed for the Atlanta Olympic Committee that proposed connecting venues by trails for easier transportation for spectators.²⁴⁴ Many of the current trails that would later be connected came from this proposal.²⁴⁵ A combination of thirty-three miles of multi-use trails, twenty-two miles of light rail, and 1,300 acres of park space form the BeltLine. The project is cited as being "the most comprehensive transportation and economic development effort ever undertaken in the City of Atlanta."²⁴⁶ While it has been in active construction since 2006, those overseeing BeltLine construction are anticipating completion in 2030.²⁴⁷ Over the past twelve years dozens of miles of paths of the BeltLine have been completed.

²⁴² Ibid., 287; A 'brownfield site' refers to an urban site that had a previous development on it. The land where Atlantic Station exists is on the former site of Atlantic Steel Company which operated from 1901 through the early 1990s.

<http://www.atlanticstation.com/history>.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ethan Davidson. "The Atlanta BeltLine: A Green Future." *Public Roads*, September 1, 2011.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ "Westside Trail." Atlanta BeltLine Project History Comments. Accessed January 27, 2018. <https://beltline.org/progress/progress/project-history/>.

²⁴⁷ "BeltLine in 5." Atlanta BeltLine Overview. Accessed January 27, 2018.

<https://beltline.org/about/the-atlanta-beltline-project/atlanta-beltline-overview/>

Response has been generally favorable, although many suggest that it may contribute to gentrification in Atlanta.²⁴⁸ For the purpose of this thesis, gentrification will be understood as being the removal of long-term residents by “the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents.”²⁴⁹ This often means that predominantly African American residents are being forced out of their homes as taxes rise and their neighborhoods become too expensive in which to remain. So far, all areas of the city that the BeltLine has passed through have experienced an increase in property values, which in turn is mirrored by an increase in property taxes.²⁵⁰

An example of the transformative effects of the BeltLine can be seen in the example of the Old Fourth Ward. Originally a thriving neighborhood founded after the Civil War, it fell into decline in the 1960s.²⁵¹ Areas of this ward, like the famous Sweet Auburn District, remained hubs for African American life in the city, but overall the Ward was in poor shape and several hundred dilapidated homes were razed as part of New Urbanism.²⁵² Prior to the BeltLine’s development, the Old

²⁴⁸ Natalie Camrud, "Race, Class, and Gentrification Along the Atlanta BeltLine" (2017). *Scripps Senior Theses*. 947. http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/947

²⁴⁹ "Gentrification." Merriam-Webster. Accessed February 28, 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gentrification>.

²⁵⁰ Dan Immergluck. "Large Redevelopment Initiatives, Housing Values and Gentrification: The Case of the Atlanta BeltLine." *Urban Studies* 46.8 (2009)

²⁵¹ Harley F. Etienne and Barbara Faga, *Planning Atlanta*. 40

²⁵² Harley F. Etienne and Barbara Faga, *Planning Atlanta* (Chicago: APA Planners 2014). 61. New Urbanism is a concept of urban planning that highlights the importance of walkable, livable cities and neighborhoods. Multi-use developments that feature “work, live, and play” elements are examples of this concept in use.

Fourth Ward (OFW) was home to the most low-income housing in the Southeast.²⁵³

An undeveloped plot of land in the Old Fourth Ward cost \$145,000 in 2013 and increased to \$500,000 within three years. Similarly, a house close to Ponce City Market more than doubled its selling price of \$317,000 in 2011 to around \$650,000 in 2016.²⁵⁴ These dramatic price changes demonstrate the impact of the BeltLine on an in-town neighborhood, specifically one comparable to the West End's current status, further discussed in the following section.

This brief history of the city provides background on the major themes over time that have influenced the development of the neighborhoods within and around the city limits. It also provides context for the specific analysis of the West End, the neighborhood in which the Wren's Nest resides. This is provided below.

²⁵³ Henry, Scott. "Down on Boulevard: Positive changes might finally come to Atlanta's lawless street." *Creative Loafing* 19 May 2009. Web. 15 Oct. 2016.

²⁵⁴ Natalie Camrud, "Race, Class, and Gentrification Along the Atlanta BeltLine" (2017). *Scripps Senior Theses*. 51. http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/947

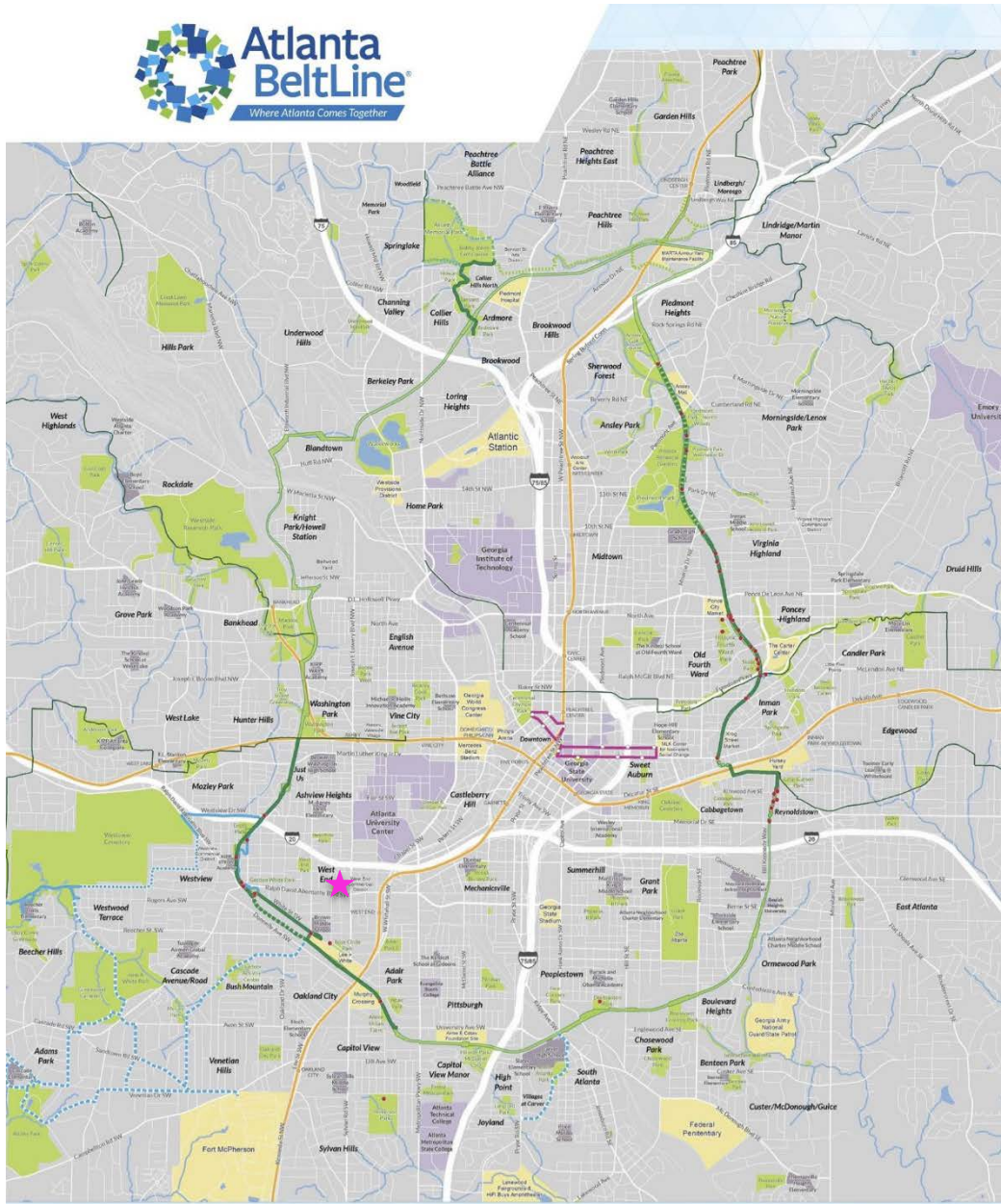


Figure 7: Atlanta BeltLine Overview Map. Wren's Nest Location starred.
<https://shop.beltline.org/product/poster-atlanta-beltline-map/>

West End History Overview

The West End is on the National Register of Historic Places as an Historic District. The boundaries of the district are I-20 to the north, Ashby Street to the east, and the Seaboard Railway tracks and Whitehall Street to the south running diagonally to Langhorn Street on the west.²⁵⁵ This roughly fifty-block district was added to the Register in 1999 and 83.7% of the 928 total resources were found to be contributing resources, an indication of the historic integrity of the area. The district is recognized for significance at the local level regarding architecture, commerce, and community planning and development from its founding through to 1952.²⁵⁶

The West End was officially founded in 1835, two miles west from Atlanta's center. A frontier outpost of the 1830s, the West End grew from the crossroads of the northbound Newnan-Decatur Road and the westbound Sandtown Road.²⁵⁷ A tavern and inn were built in 1830 and more was developed to support the local community known originally as White Hall. During the Civil War, the main east-west thoroughfare of the West End, Gordon Street, now Ralph David Abernathy Road, was considered to be of strategic importance to the defense of Atlanta and Confederate breastworks were constructed to protect these connections to the city. In July 1864, the Confederate soldiers abandoned the area that ultimately led to further Union control of the perimeter of the city.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ National Register of Historic Places, West End Historic District, Atlanta, Fulton, Georgia, 97000612. 6.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 9.

²⁵⁷ Karen Huebner to Concerned Parties, memorandum, December 3, 1991. "Designation of West End Historic District". Memorandum. 10.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

After the Civil War an old racetrack was repurposed into barracks for federal troops near what would become Spelman College. Union soldiers' presence helped define a safe geography for the African American population of the West End, which by 1870 was about half of the total population.²⁵⁹ The West End was incorporated in 1868 by the State in order for the community to gain more control over local ordinances and laws. The residents received a charter and renamed the area West End after the popular theater district in London. The previously unincorporated city was not subject to liquor licenses; this resulted in unruly behavior, and furthermore, there were no city taxes or police to enforce order.²⁶⁰ With the rebuilding of Atlanta following its burning during the Civil War, the West End recognized the potential for development as a suburb of the city. The Western and Macon Railroads had daily passes for commuters to travel into the city, and by 1871, the first streetcars from the city center to the West End were built.²⁶¹

The subdivision of land plats was undertaken by developers George Washington Adair, Thomas Alexander, and John Thrasher. Their vision was to create the ideal suburb for the capital, partly by attracting wealthy white citizens. That attraction was partially accomplished through naming choices for the roads: Stephen Lee, General John B. Gordon, General Alexander R. Lawton, and Brigadier General Turner Ashby are all confederates whose names adorn the streets in the West End. There are also streets like Peeple and Hopkins that honor two

²⁵⁹ Karen Huebner to Concerned Parties, memorandum, December 3, 1991. "Designation of West End Historic District". Memorandum. 10, 11.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁶¹ Harley F. Etienne and Barbara Faga, *Planning Atlanta*. 78.

Reconstruction Era judges in Atlanta. Uncle Remus Avenue, currently Lawton Place, was named for the fictional character that Joel Chandler Harris created, and Grady Place refers to the prominent New-South advocate and *Atlanta Constitution* editor Henry Grady.²⁶²

After a national economic depression in the 1870s, the West End grew following plans developed the decade prior. Wealthy white citizens such as former Governor James Smith, Mayor Dennis Hammond, department store founder Thomas Stokes, doctor T. D. Longino, President of the Atlanta Board of Education L. Z. Rosser, and author and journalist Joel Chandler Harris moved into the new suburb.²⁶³ By 1894, and as a result of the area's growth, Atlanta annexed the West End after two decades of planned suburbanization.²⁶⁴ Its establishment as the Seventh Ward of the city granted a certain degree of autonomy that it, as a growing neighborhood, required.

From annexation in 1894 to the start of the Great Depression, a consistent and large number of building permits were approved. The majority were for single-family residences along Peeples, Gordon, Lee, and Lawton streets with commercial buildings on Gordon and Lee, and the majority of the extant housing was built during these first few decades after annexation.²⁶⁵ The predominant architectural styles of these homes were Vernacular Queen Anne Revival or Craftsman in single

²⁶² Karen Huebner to Concerned Parties, memorandum, December 3, 1991. "Designation of West End Historic District". Memorandum. 12.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 15.

story cottage form, but Folk Victorian, Stick, Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival, and Neoclassical Revival also exist.²⁶⁶

A 1911 Sanborn map provides insight into what the neighborhood looked like around the time the Uncle Remus Memorial Association took over management of the Wren's Nest.²⁶⁷ At that time, significant expansion of Atlanta had occurred, so the West End, and many other streetcar suburbs, were included in the index map. The 1911 Sanborn, Sheet 361 (Figure 8) shows the outline of the Wren's Nest along what was then 366 Gordon Avenue.²⁶⁸ This sheet, and the surrounding ones, shows that all the West End land plats were full. Most of the plats have yellow buildings, indicating that they were of wood frame construction. The outline provided on this map of the Wren's Nest shows the footprint of the building as it existed in 1911. The majority of the houses shown on the map are still extant today, ensuring the neighborhood retains this character.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 18.

²⁶⁷ This is from a Sanborn Map, a collection of fire insurance maps that were made from the 1870s through as late as the 1970s in cities across America. These maps were made to provide information on buildings regarding their material and size to assess their value for insurance purposes. Historians are able to see a snapshot of an individual building or to gain insight into a larger region through these maps. The earliest Sanborn of the West End is from 1911.

²⁶⁸ Sanborn: Atlanta, Fulton, Ga. 1911-s-361. Accessed April 20, 2018.

http://dlgcsmlib.uga.edu/StyleServer/calcrn?browser=ns&cat=sanb&wid=700&hei=700&style=sanborn/sanb_lg.xml&item=atlanta-fulton-ga-1911-s-361.sid.

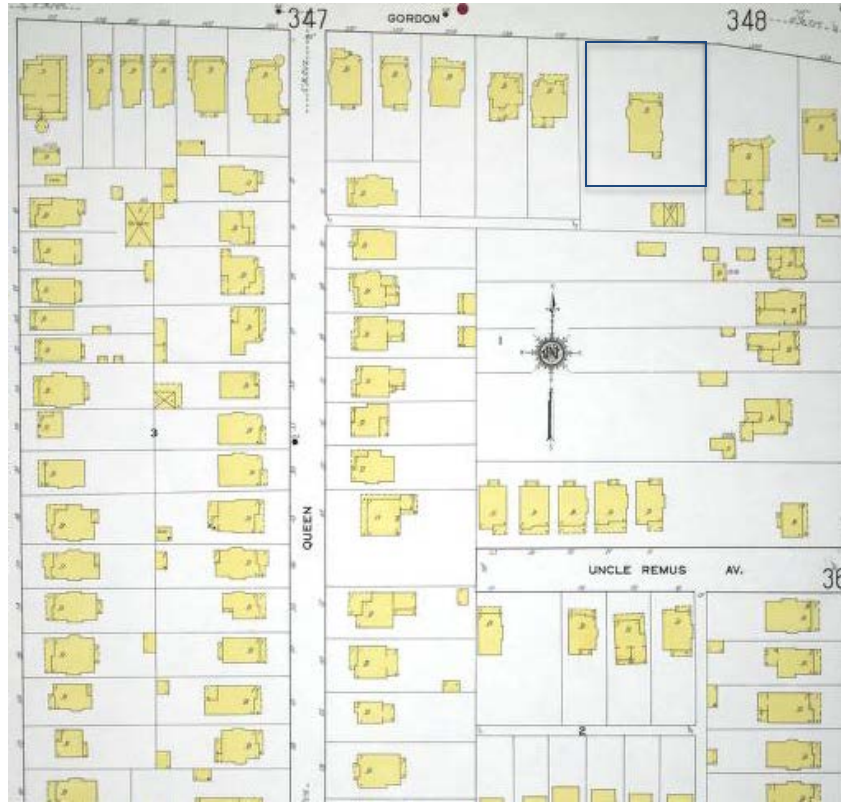


Figure 8: 2011 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. The Wren's Nest Outlined.
http://dlgcm.galib.uga.edu/StyleServer/calcrn?browser=ns&cat=sanb&wid=700&hei=700&style=sanborn/sanb_lg.xsl&item=atlanta-fulton-ga-1911-s-361.sid

The housing of the West End was racially segregated following restrictive zoning ordinances passed by the City of Atlanta in the 1920s, as well as violence aimed at African Americans to intimidate from the late 1800s to the 1960s. This is evident in the Atlanta Redlining Map of 1940 from the Home Owners Lending Company (HOLC), shown in Figure 9.²⁶⁹ HOLC was a New Deal project developed to

²⁶⁹ Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed March 28, 2018, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=15/33.7440/-84.4350&opacity=0.8&sort=33&area=D17&city=atlanta-ga&text=about>

provide color-coded maps to label areas according to their safety and liability risks for homeowners. Red corresponded to hazardous, yellow to definitely declining, blue to still be desirable, and green to best. This map shows that the West End, including the location of the Wren's Nest, was considered to be in a declining area by 1940. It is worth noting that the locations where Spelman College, Morehouse University, and Clark Atlanta University are located, three of Atlanta's Historically Black Colleges and Universities, are also coded in red. HOLC has been criticized for labeling based on racial demographics, and the maps are considered to be a source of housing inequality that continues to perpetuate racially segregated neighborhoods into the present.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," *American Panorama*.

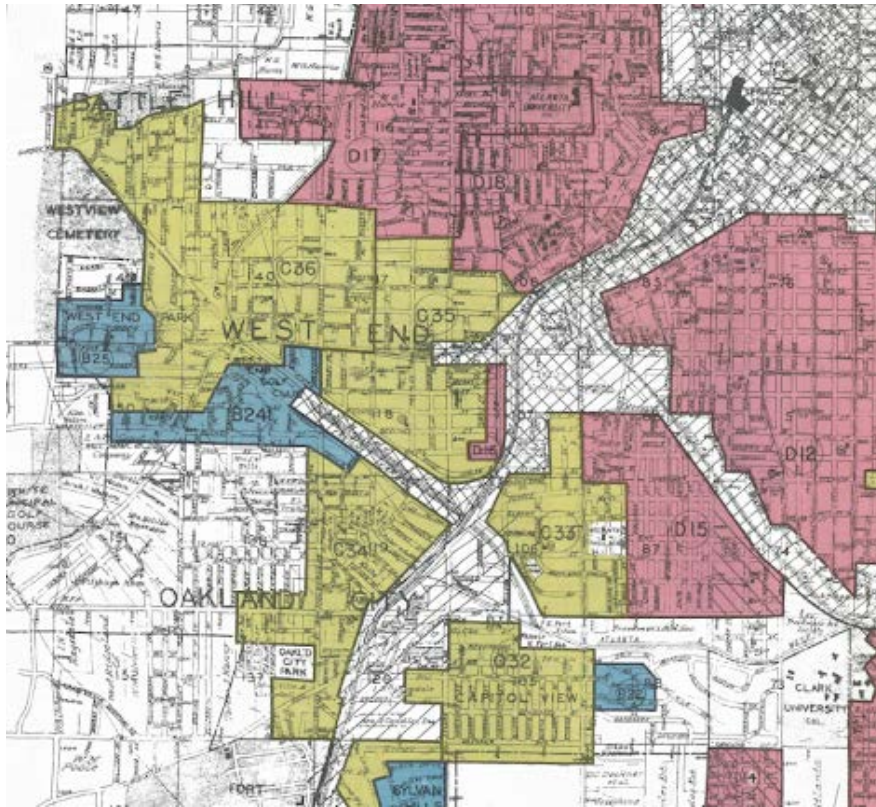


Figure 9: 1940 Home Owners Lending Company Map, West End Detail

Through the 1950s, attempts continued to keep the West End white. The J. C. Harris Public Housing Project, also called the Harris Homes, was built in 1956 just north of the currently defined historic district. West End Businessman's Association and Atlanta Housing Authority member Frank Etheridge decided on this placement.²⁷¹ That development was intended as a barrier to separate the predominantly African American housing to the north from the still white West End. Another boundary was the placement of I-20 whose location has also been called

²⁷¹ National Register of Historic Places, West End Historic District, Atlanta, Fulton, Georgia, 97000612. 23.

into question for seeming to bisect the historic neighborhood along race lines.²⁷²

The traditional African American northern section was cut off from the remainder of the West End through the placement of I-20, and inversely, the white population was separated from the traditional African American northern section. Despite this segregation, the West End followed the same demographic trend of Atlanta and transitioned in the 1960s and 1970s into a predominantly African American neighborhood.²⁷³

The West End demographics have been acquired through census data and show that the transition from majority white to majority African American took place between 1960 and 1970. In those years the white population decreased 31.76% while the African American population increased 31.65%. This corresponds to the trend of “white flight” that was taking place in cities across America as white families moved to the suburbs.²⁷⁴ The census information was taken by county until 1940. By 1950, with the exception of 1960 when it reverted to the county, the census divided counties into smaller tracts for more specific information. These records, indicated with T in Table 1, show that the population of the West End was steadily in decline from 1970 through 2010.²⁷⁵ The estimated population records for 2016 indicated a growth for the first time in over a generation.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ National Register of Historic Places, West End Historic District, Atlanta, Fulton, Georgia, 97000612. 6.

²⁷⁴ Karen Huebner to Concerned Parties, memorandum, December 3, 1991. “Designation of West End Historic District”. Memorandum. 17.

²⁷⁵ "US Demography 1790 to Present." Social Explorer. Accessed February 06, 2018. <https://www.socialexplorer.com/a9676d974c/explore>.

Table 1: West End Population and Race Demographics from 1870-2016				
Year	Population	% White	% Black	County or Tract
1870	33,446	54.31	45.69	C
1880	49,137	57.58	42.42	C
1890	84,655	58.58	41.81	C
1900	40,113	59.88	40.11	C
1910	177,733	67.33	32.62	C
1920	232,606	69.8	30.18	C
1930	318,587	68.12	31.86	C
1940	2,414	90.8	9.2	T
1950	Census data not yet released			
1960	556,326	65.24	34.7	C
1970	5,801	33.48	66.35	T
1980	5,344	3.44	95.83	T
1990	4,617	2.17	97.38	T
2000	4,326	1.66	97.23	T
2010	3,620	1.85	95.58	T
2016	3,872	1.34	97.08	T

In 2001 and 2002, there was a large-scale mortgage fraud scheme that affected a great percentage of the West End.²⁷⁶ Over 80 properties were purchased by a developer, who was later charged and found guilty of fraud, and who lied about the status of the homes to acquire more than \$15 million in mortgage loans.²⁷⁷ The lenders lost \$8 million and the property taxes of the neighborhood doubled due to falsely inflated property values.²⁷⁸ This destabilized the community and long-term residents were forced to move; it turned many, once-thriving neighborhoods into streets now only dotted with activity.

Gentrification is already being felt in the West End. Within the past few years the real estate market in the West End has experienced activity that was absent for many years. Houses are being purchased at low costs and renovated for resale or for immediate occupancy. New building projects follow the BeltLine, which is adjacent to the West End, and speculators plan around it as well. Several Atlanta-based businesses have recently decided to open new locations in the West End. Monday Night Brewery, a local craft brewery whose first location was in West Midtown, opened their second location steps from the West End BeltLine.²⁷⁹ Opened in 2017 in an old garage, this tasting room, event space, and brewery brought new life and

²⁷⁶ Lain Shakespeare. "WN History Interview." Interview by Author. October Date, 2017. Ponce City Market, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁷⁷ "Ellenwood man guilty in Atlanta mortgage fraud case." *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, October 18, 2007.

<https://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/stories/2007/10/15/daily27.html>.

²⁷⁸ "Ellenwood man guilty in Atlanta mortgage fraud case." *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, October 18, 2007.

<https://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/stories/2007/10/15/daily27.html>.

²⁷⁹ Scott Henry. "Monday Night Brewing's big gamble along the Atlanta BeltLine." *Atlanta Magazine*. March 22, 2017. Accessed January 27, 2018.

<http://www.atlantamagazine.com/drinks/monday-night-brewings-big-gamble-along-atlanta-beltline/>.

purpose to an abandoned garage that is part of Lee + White, a 426,000 square foot mixed-use development.²⁸⁰ When the plan to open the Brewery was presented to the West End Neighborhood Development Committee it was met with overwhelming support as the brewery sought to bring their product to what they called an “underserved part of Atlanta.”²⁸¹

In addition to parks and trails, the BeltLine is also an outdoors art exhibit, with dozens of installations around its entirety. Further, in keeping with the outdoor art exhibits of the BeltLine elsewhere in Atlanta, one such art installation, called “The West End Remembers,” features Uncle Remus telling stories to children.²⁸² This mural (Figures 10 and 11), by artist Malaika Favorite, features several “icons of the area” on the wall of an underpass on Lawton Street just two blocks from the house museum.^{283 284} The inclusion of Uncle Remus telling stories to children with images linking Native American and African themes shows the complex, multicultural history of the area.

²⁸⁰ "About." Lee and White. Accessed January 27, 2018. <http://www.leeandwhiteatl.com/about.html>.

²⁸¹ Scott Henry. "Monday Night Brewing's big gamble along the Atlanta BeltLine." Atlanta Magazine. March 22, 2017. Accessed January 27, 2018

²⁸² "Malaika Favorite." Painting: West End Remembers MURAL" (Original Art by Malaika Favorite). Accessed April 02, 2018. <http://malaikafavorite.artspan.com/large-multi-view/COMMISSIONS/201196-1-16645/COMMISSIONS.html>.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ "Wren's Nest to Lawton Street Underpass Mural." Google Maps. Accessed April 02, 2018. <https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Lee+White,+White+Street+Southwest,+Atlanta,+GA/The+Wren's+Nest,+1050+Ralph+David+Abernathy+Blvd,+Atlanta,+GA>

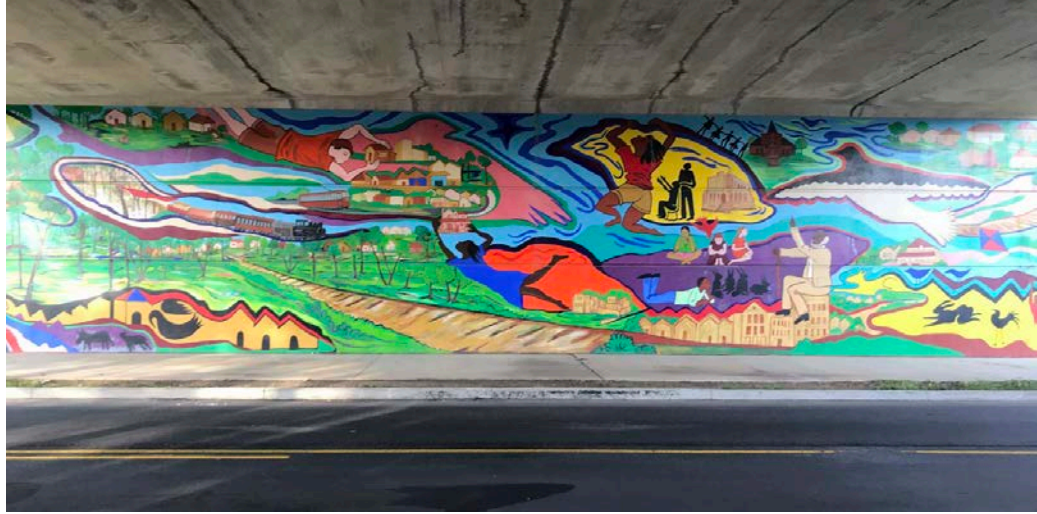


Figure 10: "The West End Remembers" Mural by Malaika Favorite. Photo by Author



Figure 11: "The West End Remembers" Mural by Malaika Favorite. Detail. Photo by Author

There currently exists a neighborhood advocacy group, The West End Neighborhood Development, Inc. (WEND), that was founded in the 1970s and is responsible for both research and writing the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the West End as an historic district. WEND President Marquis “Tony” McNeal states that WEND’s mission is “to continuously revitalize one of the most historically vibrant, walkable, diverse and charming neighborhoods of intown Atlanta, Georgia.”²⁸⁵ This is done through a series of programs such as a spring egg hunt, tour of homes, and summer music concert.²⁸⁶ WEND sells neighborhood flags for members to display from their homes as a way to bolster pride about the West End as well as to provide visitors with a way to recognize the boundaries of the historic district.²⁸⁷ In the National Register nomination, WEND concluded by saying that the West End “was once described as one of Atlanta’s most socially diverse and culturally rich communities, it is again returning to the tradition of its past as it relates to the regeneration of community value and revitalization.”²⁸⁸

This chapter provides information about the origins and development of Atlanta since its inception in 1836 to the present day, and of the West End, the community in which the Wren’s Nest resides.

²⁸⁵ “Join WEND.” Historic West End. April 11, 2016. Accessed April 01, 2018. <https://atlantawestend.com/join-wend/>.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ “Shop.” Historic West End. April 1, 2018. <https://atlantawestend.com/shop/blocks-of-culture-banner/>

²⁸⁸ National Register of Historic Places, West End Historic District, Atlanta, Fulton, Georgia, 97000612. 20.

CHAPTER 5

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WREN'S NEST

This chapter will discuss the current mission and goals of the Wren's Nest and review the newly-ratified Strategic Plan. Further, this chapter will introduce two frameworks from which the operations of the House will be considered: the practical framework from the *Anarchist's Guide To Historic House Museums* (*Anarchist's Guide* from this point forward), and the theoretical framework of Third Space.²⁸⁹ Finally, the chapter will analyze and provide an assessment of specific aspects of the current mission and strategic plan of the Wren's Nest guided by the two frameworks, and supported by the research presented in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

The Strategic Plan, Mission, and Goals of the Wren's Nest

The JCHA hired Speakman Management Consulting group in 2016 to develop a comprehensive strategic plan.²⁹⁰ The initial steps included conducting a situational analysis, and interviews with staff, board members, and external stakeholders. Opportunities to complete a survey were provided.²⁹¹ One staff focus

²⁸⁹ Franklin D. Vagnone, Deborah E. Ryan, and Olivia B. Cothren. *Anarchists guide to historic house museums*. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2016.

²⁹⁰ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren's Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 1.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

group was also held.²⁹² The Strategic Plan evolved from those data and follow-up meetings. The Board ratified the Strategic Plan on February 8, 2017.²⁹³

The former mission statement of the Wren's Nest from 2013 to 2017, and available on the website was:

By preserving the legacy of Joel Chandler Harris and the heritage of African American folklore through storytelling, tours and student publishing, the Wren's Nest serves as an educational resource for the community, the greater Atlanta area and visitors from around the globe.²⁹⁴

The current Strategic Plan presents an amended mission with several key changes worthy of note:

By preserving the heritage of African American folklore through storytelling, tours, and student publishing and the legacy of Joel Chandler Harris, the Wren's Nest serves as a valued educational and cultural resource.²⁹⁵

The most significant change is the introductory clause focused on preserving the heritage of African American folklore and the mechanism by which that will be accomplished; storytelling, tours, and student publishing. Transitioning the location of preserving the legacy of Joel Chandler Harris from the introductory clause in the former mission statement to a secondary position in the current mission statement appears to explicitly mirror Harris's own intent of having the stories come first.

The three-year strategic objectives fall under four broad topics: mission, finance and funding, capacity, and processes. Initial annual goals fall under topics of program, finance and fundraising, processes, and internal processes with priority

²⁹² Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren's Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 1.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ "About | The Wren's Nest." The Wrens Nest RSS. Accessed April 09, 2018. http://www.wrensnest.org/about_mission.php.

²⁹⁵ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren's Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 1.

status given to several goals for each. Given that a comprehensive Strategic Plan has been developed, this chapter will emphasize steps that have been proposed in this Plan as they relate to the mission statement of preserving the heritage of African American folklore through storytelling, tours, and student publishing and the legacy of Joel Chandler Harris through the lenses of the frameworks of *Anarchist's Guide* and the theory of Third Space.

Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums

The preservation and museum communities agree that historic house museums (HHM) have struggled with "image" for several decades.²⁹⁶ The seeming disconnect between the subfield of house museums and what appeals to a 21st century visitor is apparent in the overwhelmingly poor reputation and status that most have.²⁹⁷ In 2016, a book titled *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums*, authored by Franklin Vagnone and Deborah Ryan, was published that sought to provide an assessment of why this is so often the case and provide strategies to address this issue.²⁹⁸ Integrating key concepts about successful museums, public history, landscape architecture, urban planning, and architecture, Vagnone and Ryan present a self-proclaimed "manifesto, guidebook, and laboratory of ideas" for reviving failing house museums.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ "Resource or burden? Historic house museums confront the 21st century." National Council on Public History. Accessed February 27, 2018. <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/resource-or-burden/>

²⁹⁷ Franklin D. Vagnone, Deborah E. Ryan, and Olivia B. Cothren. *Anarchists guide to historic house museums*. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2016. 13.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 16.

The *Anarchist's Guide* is used to provide the following framework for assessment because it is considered to be a forward-thinking approach to house museum interpretation and management among both museum professionals and academics.³⁰⁰ The Wren's Nest is an ideal site for analysis based on this framework. It is a traditional house museum that almost closed in the early 2000s due to financial and image mismanagement, and is positioned for a radical, 21st century approach to maximize its potential to become a "neighborhood anchor" as stated in its Vision for 2021 in its Strategic Plan.³⁰¹

Vagnone and Ryan present the five main issues that people have with HHMs and provide steps that directors can take to overcome these critiques.³⁰² The five main critiques are: 1) they are too political and full of social propaganda from the time, 2) they are too expensive to preserve, 3) these spaces have nothing relevant to contribute to modern society and are too old-fashioned, 4) they are boring, and 5) these spaces are too curated/limiting to the visitor and not representative of real life.³⁰³

The ultimate issue that is distilled from these five critiques is that HHMs overwhelmingly have failed to make connections to the real world and are not seen as relatable places to the majority of visitors.³⁰⁴ Vagnone and Ryan suggest that if these five critiques are considered, and changes are made in response to them, then

³⁰⁰ Laura C. Keim. Review: *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* by Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan. *The Public Historian* Vol. 38 No. 2, May 2016 (pp. 100-102)

³⁰¹ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren's Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 1.

³⁰² Franklin D. Vagnone, Deborah E. Ryan, and Olivia B. Cothren. *Anarchists guide to historic house museums*. 2016.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 40, 41.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

HHMs will be more relatable and inviting. The intent is not to separate the HHM from its purpose, but to strengthen it by making spaces more relatable and welcoming.³⁰⁵ These critiques, as they relate to the Wren’s Nest, and the newly ratified Mission Statement and Strategic Plan, are discussed below.

Anarchist’s Guide Point 1: They are too political and full of social propaganda

The image and legacy of Joel Chandler Harris remains controversial. As discussed in Chapter 2, many potential visitors are kept away by their assumptions that the Museum supports what they feel is cultural appropriation of the stories, a stereotypical presentation of Uncle Remus, and a supportive view of the plantation system.

As was discussed in Chapter 3, the politics and social views of the first two associations in charge of the Wren’s Nest hijacked the mission of the Museum, and sullied the reputation of Joel Chandler Harris and the stories. Both URMA and JCHMA participated in segregated policies that marred the reputation of the Museum for decades. The Wren’s Nest acknowledges this past in the new Strategic Plan when it states that part of their mission is to “give the stories back to the community and serve as a place for truth and reconciliation.”³⁰⁶ This reconciliation is aimed at making amends with the African American community, a group of people barred from entering the premises until 1968, and not truly welcome until JCHA took over in 1984. The Museum’s association with *Song of the South* was merged as

³⁰⁵ Franklin D. Vagnone, Deborah E. Ryan, and Olivia B. Cothren. *Anarchists guide to historic house museums*. 39.

³⁰⁶ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren’s Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 1.

a result of URMA's direct involvement with the movie through sponsored, segregated events during the release of the film in 1946 and subsequent events in 1947. While views of the film vary, the modern consensus of the film is that it is problematic, as is evidenced by Disney's own censorship of the film since 1986. And yet, one of the first things that visitors today see upon entering the Museum are several large stuffed characters from the movie, with no context or commentary, other than that they were part of the Disney movie.

Anarchist's Guide Point 2: They are too expensive to preserve

Museums are expensive. But to say that they are too expensive implies that they are not worth the money to save. This sentiment may change once the value in the Wren's Nest is apparent to those it serves. However, for the practical issue of funds, the new Strategic Plan covers finances and fundraising to bolster the current financial status of the Museum so that it will be able to undertake more projects, events, restoration, and expansion.³⁰⁷

The Plan also suggests two major ways to improve financial stability. First, there are plans to have "better donor relations with broader and more diverse funders: city, foundations, and individuals." Second is an emphasis on an increased earned income through a rise in ticket prices and the possibility of offering fee-based programs.

Improvements in donor relations are evident. Relationships with the City of Atlanta is demonstrated through partnerships with Fulton County Arts and Culture,

³⁰⁷ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren's Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 1.

the Atlanta Office of Cultural Affairs, and Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta.³⁰⁸ Corporate sponsorships such as Gas South, MailChimp, and Eversheds Southerland, are supporting the Museum's ability to further its mission.³⁰⁹ For the first time, in 2017, two notable foundations, the Imlay Foundation and the Watson-Brown Foundation, provided financial support to the Wren's Nest.³¹⁰ The recent increase in donations from city, corporate, and foundations shows that the current administration is demonstrating increased effectiveness in securing funding.

The second funding strategy is related to increasing earned income. The current Strategic Plan identifies the establishment of a "Friends of the Wren's Nest" program.³¹¹ While not described in detail, a membership-based yearly fee would increase both funding, museum use, and possible recognition. At least an idea exists for increasing donations from individuals. Current proposals include rental of the facilities for events, the production of prepacked writing programs, and the establishment of fee-based programs.³¹² An already initiated aspect of the earned income plan is the recent increase in ticket prices by two dollars a person. The current fee for admission to the house museum is now \$10 for adults and \$8 for students and children.³¹³ Still, this is less than half the cost of the other notable literary house museum in Atlanta, the Margaret Mitchell House located a few miles away, as well as being a dollar less than the national average to go to the movie

³⁰⁸ Melissa Swindell. "Follow Up- Question." E-mail to Rebekah Helfgot. April 4, 2018.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren's Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 1.

³¹² Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren's Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 3.

³¹³ "Visiting the Wren's Nest." The Wrens Nest. Accessed April 01, 2018.

http://www.wrensnest.org/visit_visit.php.

theatre.³¹⁴ As the Museum is building its “brand,” this lower ticket price may incentivize more visitors.

Past fundraising efforts have not always met their goals. As mentioned in Chapter 3, despite the capital campaign from the 1980s to fund the restoration by Lane Greene, the project still fell short and was never completed. While the Wren’s Nest did not meet their goal for the Campaign in the 1980s, with focus on the new Vision and Mission, the Wren’s Nest is today better positioned for financial success.

Anarchist’s Guide Points 3: These spaces have nothing relevant to contribute to modern society and are too old-fashioned

This critique of relevance is valid to a certain degree. The current tour that is in place provides an overview of Harris’s life and touches upon his stories. There is only one tour, one set of speaking points, and just one way that this information is presented for the variety of visitors (eg. history buffs, literary enthusiasts, children) who go to the Wren’s Nest. Currently, there are plans to rework the tours to best fit with the needs, interests, and desires of different groups. Newly-proposed tours will implement “hot spot” technology as a way for visitors to be able to interact with artifacts in the House using an app on their cell phones or on provided tablets.. Furthermore, there will be three different tours available: the first exploring the literary traditions of the West End, the second exploring the history of the New South/Reconstruction Era in the West End, and third, a tour that implements

³¹⁴ "2017: Average Price of a Movie Ticket Hit an All-Time High | Money." Time. Accessed February 27, 2018. <http://time.com/money/5109443/movie-ticket-price-2017/>.

research from this thesis related to the history of the house as a Museum. In addition to these three tours, whose targeted audiences are high school students and adults, there will be a child-friendly tour. This will provide information on Harris and his stories on a level and in a medium that is best suited for elementary and middle school children. The new tours, which are scheduled to premiere in summer 2018, are a way that the Wren's Nest may prove its relevance as a place with valuable stories to share and lessons to teach with visitors of varying interests and ages.

The current programs that are in place give back to the community and contribute to modern society. As discussed in Chapter 3, for the past 10 years the Wren's Nest has provided one-on-one mentorship to middle school students at two West End schools through their Scribes program. This direct outreach within the community, is an example of the educational contributions that this house museum is making on the lives of local students. Outreach is also evident through the successful programs for adults and families like Beyond Books, Jazz Matters, and the Summer Concert Series. In an interview with WEND President Marquis McNeal he stated, " We just hosted a porch party there, and as always we have our tenth annual Candlelight concert in September. They [the Wren's Nest] are also part of our historic West End Tour of Homes." Table 2 shows the programming for 2018. Several of these have been sponsored by local organizations, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Table 2: 2018 Scheduled Events ³¹⁵		
Event	Date	Cost
Storytelling	Every Saturday	Included in Museum Admission
Beyond Books	2 nd Wednesdays	Free
Black History Month	Saturdays in February	Included in Museum Admission
Phoenix Flies	March 17 and 21	Free
Jazz Matters Summer Concerts	3 rd Fridays June – September	\$20/Adults
Living Room Series, Jazz Matters	2 nd Sundays (excluding June-September)	\$15 suggested donation
NESTflix Movie Series	2 nd Saturdays June – September	Free
Decatur Book Festival	September 1, 2	Free
Halloween	Saturdays in October	Included in Museum Admission
Victorian Holiday Open House	December 8	Free

Anarchist's Guide Point 4: Too boring

The HHM will bore an audience if visitors do not see the relevance of the museum in their lives.³¹⁶ Freeman Tilden, considered by many to be the father of historic site interpretation, created a list of principles that should be followed for good interpretation.³¹⁷ One of these principles is the following: “Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.”³¹⁸ An individual

³¹⁵ Kalin Thomas. *2018 Schedule*. January 2, 2018. Wren's Nest Instagram Account.

In *Instagram*. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BddTL3rjU7c/?taken-by=wrensnestatl>.

³¹⁶ Freeman Tilden, and R. Bruce. Craig. *Interpreting our heritage*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 34.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

will care about a site if they are able to make an emotional connection to it somehow.³¹⁹

In the case of the Wren's Nest, the newly-proposed tours will take a big step in eliminating this point of concern. The introduction of technology paired with a traditional docent will provide a unique experience for visitors that will allow them to engage on a variety of levels with the space: with the house, with the technology, and with others on the tour. The expansion of the current tour from one tour into several thematic tours also expands the information presented. This way visitors can choose which tour best fits their interests.

A current program that has been in place since 1985 is the storytelling program. Qualified storytellers perform many of the *Uncle Remus* stories. One of the sources of concern over Joel Chandler Harris's writing has been the difficulty for some people to read the transliterated words. It is written phonetically so as to reproduce the Middle Georgia Dialect as accurately as possible, but this is often something with which readers struggle.³²⁰ The storytellers are the vehicles through which the stories become accessible to a larger audience. The tradition of oral histories and storytelling is an art form that is in decline as other means of storytelling (radio, television, film, the internet) have been created over the past century.

³¹⁹ Freeman Tilden, and R. Bruce. Craig. *Interpreting our heritage*. 34.

³²⁰ R. Bruce Bickley, and Hugh T. Keenan. 1997. *Joel Chandler Harris : an annotated bibliography of criticism, 1977-1996 : with supplement, 1892-1976*. n.p.: Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997.,

Not only are these performances of the stories not boring, but they are also incredibly important for the preservation of this aspect of Intangible Cultural History (ICH). Oral histories and folktales are considered to be ICH, and are valuable features of a specific group of people's heritage. Other examples of ICH include performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, language, and traditional craftsmanship.³²¹ The United Nations Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) states, "The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that are transmitted through it from one generation to the next."³²² This transmission is essential, otherwise the cultural manifestation, storytelling in this case, is lost over time.

The United States National Park Service (NPS) is the voice of authority and provides insight regarding cultural resource management in America. The NPS, a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior, has been in existence for over a century, having been established in 1916 with the mission to "preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations." While originally intended to manage the tangible aspects of heritage, the NPS recognizes the interconnectedness that often accompanies ICH with sites.³²³ The Wren's Nest is

³²¹ "Intangible Cultural Heritage." Intangible Cultural Heritage website. Accessed January 15, 2018. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/oral-traditions-and-expressions-00053>.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ "Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage (U.S. National Park Service)." National Parks Service. Accessed January 15, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/tangible-cultural-heritage.htm>.

a prime example as it features a physical structure as well as the traditions of storytelling.

Anarchist's Guide Point 5: These spaces are too curated/limiting to the visitor and not representative of real life.

The newly-proposed tours will alleviate much of the concern regarding excessive curation. As of January 2018, the rope that kept foot traffic from entering Harris's bedroom was removed for the first time in decades.³²⁴ This removal of a piece of rope signifies that barriers are coming down, both physically within the house, and through truthful dialog about the man, the stories, and the management. A truthful history of the site will soon be presented to visitors as part of an official tour for the first time in the Museum's history.

The legacy of Joel Chandler Harris can be woven into experiences of modern life. Racial inequality was the predominant issue during Harris's life, and arguably remains so today. It appears that he was an advocate for social justice, as evidenced by his writings and his actions. The segregated and racist views that the managers of the House explicitly enacted for over half a century using his name and stories that diametrically differed from his views can be used to educate and illuminate struggles of the far and recent past. Today's social movements like Black Lives Matter, March For Our Lives, and the Women's March are some examples of current

³²⁴ Melissa Swindell. "Second Meeting." Interview by author. April 4, 2018. Conducted at Crema: Espresso Gourmet. Dunwoody, Georgia.

marches and rallies that have been held within the past several years and within a few miles of the Museum. There are parallels to be drawn between the social climate of Harris's time and the present, which can make the site more relatable.

Point 2.3 of the Strategic Plan's Initial Annual Goals is to "Partner for delivery of race dialogs (focused on link to JCH stories)."³²⁵ Priorities were placed in italics; this sentence was not italicized, nor did race dialogs take place in the year since the Strategic Plan was ratified. More can be done to highlight the history of the house for "enhanced racial dialogs."³²⁶

Theory of Third Space

Third Space is a social theory that seeks to explain why certain places are appealing to people and what makes them comfortable. The first space is the home, the second is work, and the third space is a public place with private elements attached to it. Proposed by a variety of urban sociologists and theorists like Edward Soja and Ray Oldenburg in the late 1980s and 1990s, this theory has been applied to parks, restaurants, bars, farmer's markets, and museums.³²⁷ This theory has been recently applied to libraries as a means of understanding how to make the library appealing.³²⁸ The theory proposes that the library can embrace new roles as a

³²⁵ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren's Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 2.

³²⁶ Ibid., 4.

³²⁷ Bloom, David, Ruth Cuadra, Johanna Fassbender, Elizabeth Welden-Smith, and Shelby Graham. *Foresight Research Report: Museums as Third Place*. Report. Art, University of California Santa Cruz. 2012. 1-11.

http://art.ucsc.edu/sites/default/files/CAMLF_Third_Place_Baseline_Final.pdf

³²⁸ J. Elmborg (2011). Libraries as the Spaces Between Us: Recognizing and Valuing the Third Space. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 50(4), 338-350. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/20865425> 339, 349.

“destination library” to be what the community needs. The building already exists, so it should be adapted to best fit with how it can be best used as a place for human “movement, action, and experience”.³²⁹

The Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit organization that is focused on making spaces that are inclusive and benefit the community, says the following about the power of place in areas of social division. “Placemaking can either reinforce these disparities or intentionally work to break them down.”³³⁰

Placemaking is the idea and approach of transforming a space to fit with the desire of a community so as to strengthen the connection people have with place.³³¹ A place like the Wren’s Nest has the opportunity and ability to create a place that can break down disparities and bring together the West End. After all, Joel Chandler Harris said that he wanted his legacy and lasting hope to be peace among the races; unfortunately, the Uncle Remus Memorial Association and the Joel Chandler Harris Memorial Association stood by segregated policies and did not honor his legacy. The past several decades have been an ongoing mission to stabilize the house physically as well as to restore the reputation of the Museum.

The Project for Public Spaces has identified four main elements that successful places around the world share. These include: they are accessible; people

³²⁹ Elmborg, J. (2011). Libraries as the Spaces Between Us: Recognizing and Valuing the Third Space. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 50(4), 338-350. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/20865425> 339, 349.

³³⁰ "Equity & Inclusion." Project For Public Spaces. Accessed January 27, 2018. <https://www.pps.org/category/equity-inclusion>.

³³¹ "What Is Placemaking?" Project for Public Spaces. Accessed April 04, 2018. <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>.

are engaged in activities there; the space is comfortable and has a good image; and it is a sociable place: one where people meet each other and take friends and relatives when they come to visit.”³³² These points, as they relate to the Wren’s Nest and its Mission and Strategic Plan, are discussed below.

Third Space Theory Point 1: They are accessible

From a geographic standpoint, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the Wren’s Nest is on a major thoroughfare of the West End. It is located only a half-mile from Interstate 20 and is an eight-minute drive (barring the inimitable Atlanta traffic) from the Capitol.³³³ The Museum’s location is accessible by the West End community and is seen by people who commute along Ralph David Abernathy Road.

The Wren’s Nest is also accessible from the West End BeltLine section. BeltLine access makes the site available to a new audience. This geographic connection expands the means of access, and increases the number of potential visitors. The Strategic Plan makes note of BeltLine as an area to expand marketing.³³⁴

The House itself requires improved handicap accessibility in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The current handicap accessible ramp that was

³³² "What Makes a Successful Place?" Project For Public Spaces. Accessed January 27, 2018. <https://www.pps.org/article/grplacefeat>.

³³³ Google Maps. Accessed April 09, 2018. [https://www.google.com/maps/place/The Wren's Nest/@33.7397611,-84.421878,17z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x88f5033f54fcff5:0x5dd20c7b8d347965!8m2!3d33.7375619!4d-84.422393](https://www.google.com/maps/place/The+Wren's+Nest/@33.7397611,-84.421878,17z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x88f5033f54fcff5:0x5dd20c7b8d347965!8m2!3d33.7375619!4d-84.422393).

³³⁴ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren’s Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 4.

installed in 1993 does not allow for universal wheelchair access.³³⁵ The current, limited parking is on a gravel entry road, and there is only one modern toilet in the building. A Master Site Plan is being developed to outline how to improve these and other facility elements that would allow the Wren’s Nest to host most functions.³³⁶ Renovations to make the house and grounds more accessible for a variety of patrons will improve this aspect.

Third Space Theory Point 2: People are engaged in activities there

Currently the storytelling program is an engaging activity. According to online reviews gathered from TripAdvisor and Yelp, this is the aspect of the House that is most commented on favorably by guests.³³⁷ However, storytelling only takes place on Saturdays and by appointment, so the expansion of this aspect of the mission is key. A proposal of how to expand storytelling is to have the House or the grounds open on a variety of days and times for local residents or visitors to share stories with each other. Individuals may share traditional stories that were passed down to them from their parents and grandparents. This allows the stories to be given back to the community while engaging with the space. This mission of “giving stories back to the community” is mentioned in the Strategic Plan as part of the mission of the 3-year strategic objective.³³⁸ This also flips the storytelling program

³³⁵ List of renovations and dates. From the Records of W. Lane Greene in the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Athens, Georgia.

³³⁶ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren’s Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 7.

³³⁷ See Appendix A for compilation of guest commentary

³³⁸ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren’s Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 1.

on its head: no longer are the visitors just listening, now they also have the opportunity to actively participate.

Tours are another means of engagement that currently exist. As discussed above in the *Anarchist's Guide* Point 3, the expansion of the current single tour into several thematic tours will provide more opportunities for interaction on a variety of subjects.

Currently the mentoring sessions for the Scribes Program takes place at the Middle Schools. The only interaction that the students have with the House itself is an end-of-semester party and tour. An opportunity that exists would more fully engage the Scribes Program with the Wren's Nest. The space could be viewed not only as a museum, but as a *house* in which to actively learn, and as a way the space would be more engaging as well as less sterile (a critique that is posited by Tilden³³⁹). The possible future expansion of the site is noted under Capacity subsection for the three year Strategic Goals. The possibility of "purchasing and converting adjacent land into a learning facility" would allow for more direct site interaction for the Scribes Program as well as provide a place for possible rotating exhibits of their work.³⁴⁰

Third Space Theory Point 3: The space is comfortable and has a good image.

Melissa Swindell, Executive Director of the Wren's Nest, recognizes the challenges related to image. "I think marketing is our biggest concern right now. As

³³⁹ Franklin D. Vagnone, Deborah E. Ryan, and Olivia B. Cothren. *Anarchists guide to historic house museums*. 145.

³⁴⁰ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren's Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 2.

you mentioned, the historic context of the house is first and foremost, because when the Harrises themselves lived here it was open to everybody; black, white, it didn't matter. And then when it became the Joel Chandler Harris Memorial Association it got segregated... We're not closed off like we once were thirty years ago, but people still have that perspective. So it's getting good PR out within the neighborhood and within the community, but then also bringing back returning visitors."³⁴¹

Image also varies based on the audience demographic. Program Director Kalin Thomas says that generally the older generations (here categorized as those who were old enough to have seen *Song of the South* in theatres in 1946, 1956, and/or 1972) are split in their opinion of the Museum based on race. Of the older generation, Thomas said generally that white people fondly remember visiting as children, whereas African American patrons of that era were not given the opportunity and are not interested in visiting today.³⁴² During her three years of working with the Museum, Thomas has also noted that the younger generations, who fall under the millennial category and younger, regardless of race, don't have the same reservations as the older ones because they are unaware of the issues that existed.³⁴³

³⁴¹ Melissa Swindell. "Interview with TWN Executive Director." Interview by Rebekah T. Helfgot. October 22, 2017.

³⁴² Kalin Thomas. "Interview with TWN Program Director." Interview by Rebekah T. Helfgot. October 22, 2017.

³⁴³ Ibid.

Third Space Theory Point 4: It is a sociable place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.”³⁴⁴

This goal has not yet been fully actualized, but progress is being made. WEND President Marquis McNeal sees the Wren’s Nest as a staple in the neighborhood, but he also noted that WEND is “trying to make sure that the entire community is aware of their programming and shows support.”³⁴⁵ He notes that the outside venue of the Wren’s Nest is “beautiful” and would like to see more events, like weddings, hosted there.³⁴⁶ Becoming a destination for visitors to the Museum, for participants at neighborhood events, or guests at private functions all support the site becoming a sociable place. The current Board of the Wren’s Nest supports this same idea as evidenced by their first statement in the Strategic Plan’s Vision for 2021 which answers the question, “what will be different at Wren’s Nest (sic) and for those served in 5 years” with the response to be “an anchor in the community.”³⁴⁷

The chapter provides an assessment of the Wren’s Nest’s newly-ratified Strategic Plan using the practical and theoretical frameworks of the *Anarchist’s Guide To Historic House Museums* and Third Space.

³⁴⁴ "What Makes a Successful Place?" Project For Public Spaces. Accessed January 27, 2018. <https://www.pps.org/article/grplacefeat>.

³⁴⁵ Marquis "Tony" McNeal,. "WEND Questions Response." E-mail message to author. April 10, 2018.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Speakman Management Consulting. *Wren’s Nest Strategic Plan*. February 8, 2017. 1.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Joel Chandler Harris was a self-identified “accidental author” for his retelling of stories that he learned from slaves while working as a teenager on a plantation from 1862 to 1866.³⁴⁸ The stories he learned during those five years would have a profound impact on his life as well as that of American and children’s literature.³⁴⁹ Once heralded as the author of the greatest body of folklore produced by an American, 70 years after this statement, his work, while noted for its brilliance was at the same time renounced as being inappropriate to read to children.³⁵⁰ The Wren’s Nest, Joel Chandler Harris’s home for 27 years, and where he wrote his eight *Uncle Remus* books, became Atlanta’s first house museum in 1913. Points of contention around the Museum exist about Harris’s use (or misuse) of the stories, and the site’s managerial history.

Through this thesis, perspectives on Joel Chandler Harris, the management of the Museum, and the city in which it resides demonstrate the complicated, divisive, and yet-to-be-reckoned-with past. The combination of these components led to my research question: *What is the role of the Wren’s Nest today and how can it become a more valued, influential, and educational historic site?*

³⁴⁸ Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris, folklorist*. 23.

³⁴⁹ Goldthwaite. *The Natural History of Make-believe: A Guide to the Principal Works of Britain, Europe, and America*. 256.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

To answer this question, I used primary and secondary sources of literary and archival research, as well as interviews with key leaders associated with the organization and neighborhood. The emergence of this unlikely author, and the continued intensity of opinions associated with Joel Chandler Harris are understandable. Considering his complex personal history, along with the even more challenging managerial record of the site as an HHM, as well as the geographic and cultural landscape presents unique dilemmas and opportunities for the Wren's Nest today. Accordingly, consideration of the background and contextual research and assessment of the current Strategic Plan commenced alongside two frameworks addressing practical house museum management (*Anarchist's Guide*) and theoretical assumptions of Third Space.

Based on those assessments, this chapter will summarize the role of the Wren's Nest today and its potential to become a more valued, influential, and educational historic site. The following definitions will be used for the terms "valued," "influential," and "educational."

Valued: "the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something."³⁵¹

Influential: "the capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something, or the effect itself."³⁵²

Educational: "serving to educate or enlighten"³⁵³

³⁵¹ "Value | Definition of Value in English by Oxford Dictionaries." Oxford Dictionaries | English. Accessed April 09, 2018. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/value>.

³⁵² "Influence | Definition of Influence in English by Oxford Dictionaries." Oxford Dictionaries | English. Accessed April 09, 2018. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/influence>.

³⁵³ "Educational." Dictionary.com. Accessed April 09, 2018. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/educational?s=t>.

Assessment of the five points from the *Anarchist's Guide* and four points of the Third Space theory to the Wren's Nest were considered in light of the definitions provided for value, influence, and education. The definition of best fit was applied to each of the nine points.³⁵⁴ Each point will be referenced below with its potential opportunity for impact. Table 3 provides a visual representation of how each of the points within the frameworks relate to the terms valued, influential and educational. Application of both frameworks is necessary to provide a balanced approach to how the Wren's Nest may more effectively achieve its mission. Explanations regarding the assignment of the proposed relative impact on value, influence, or education as well as additional suggestions are provided in this conclusion.

Table 3: Research Question Analysis			
	Valued	Influential	Educational
<i>Anarchist's Guide</i> Points of Critique			
Reflect political and social propaganda			X
Too expensive	X		
Nothing relevant to contribute		X	
Boring			X
Narrowly curated		X	
Third Space Theory Points of Consideration			
Accessible	X		
Engaged in Activities	X		
Good Image			X
Sociable	X		

³⁵⁴ Similar to a "line of best fit" in mathematics which relates to "a line on a graph which best illustrates the relationship between a set of points." The two points assessed in this case are the theoretical points and the definitions in the research question.
https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/best_fit

Anarchist's Guide Elements

Point 1. They are too political and full of social propaganda.

The critiques of the Wren's Nest presented in Chapter 5 serve as a platform for it to increase its educational potential. Through truthful and open dialog about Joel Chandler Harris, the stories, *Song of the South*, and earlier Museum management, the Wren's Nest is positioned to become an exemplary educational site that does not shy away from a complicated and troubling past.

Point 2. They are too expensive to preserve.

The critique of an HHM being too expensive directly relates to the value element of the research question. The further development of a "Friends of the Wren's Nest" program, modeled after similar annual membership drives at sites in Atlanta, such as The Atlanta History Center and The Fernbank Museum of Natural History, could demonstrate human and financial value.

Point 3. These spaces have nothing relevant to contribute to modern society and are too old fashioned.

The proposed new tours addressing the literary traditions of the West End, the history of the New South/Reconstruction era, and the unadulterated history of the Museum's management over time have the capacity to be truly influential for visitors to the Museum. Current programming is already having an impact by having served more than 130 middle school children over the past decade.

Point 4. Too boring

Teaching through story-telling and interactive tours, and the potential to teach visitors how to tell stories themselves, fosters the goal of reaching educational potential. Teaching through interactive historical stories that address challenging or uncomfortable topics, like the earlier segregation of the Museum, may serve to educate and enlighten.

Point 5. These spaces are too curated/limiting to the visitor and not representative of real life.

Implementing the racial dialogs referenced in the Strategic Plan, but that have not yet happened, is a way to create influential connections between today and a man who lived over 100 years ago. The Strategic Plan makes note of engaging with Atlanta University and those connections would be a real life bridge to the more recent past. There is the historic precedent of Atlanta University President Rufus E. Clement reporting the segregated policy of the Wren's Nest to the newspaper in 1966.³⁵⁵ Partnerships with Spelman, Morehouse, and Clark Atlanta would allow for a full-circle moment.

³⁵⁵ Clement charges wren's nest bias. 1966. *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, Jul 13, 1966. <http://proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu:80/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/docview/1556891395?accountid=14537> (accessed April 9, 2018).

Third Space Elements

Point 1. They are accessible.

The geographic location of the Museum, along a major thoroughfare, favors this space for accessibility and visibility. The Wren's Nest's value will be enhanced through improved accessibility. A way to add to the current and planned accessibility of the site is to consider the space from an historic standpoint. The grounds of the Wren's Nest could be partially repurposed to implement features that existed during Harris's lifetime, including the reintroduction of historic plants, like roses and berries in the front yard, and a vegetable garden in the rear. This garden could be used as a community garden or a teaching garden as a way to harken back to the legacy of the Snap Bean Farm, the home's former name.

Point 2. People are engaged in activities there.

Expanding storytelling, one of the successful engaging features at the Wren's Nest, will enhance the value of the site, as storytelling has the capacity to have an effect on the person who is participating in the experience. Hosting public and private events and making full use of the grounds will further increase the value for each individual who visits.

Point 3. The space is comfortable and has a good image.

“It used to be racist. The efforts to keep it alive and transcend its racism may interest some folks.”³⁵⁶ This online review of the site on TripAdvisor does not mince words, but illuminates an image issue that separates it from many other house museums. This creates the opportunity for dialog and education, and Harris descendant Lain Shakespeare sees this history as an opportunity to enlighten. “What better way to interpret the mission [of the Wren’s Nest] than to educate people and really make that emotional change. That’s not something that most house museums ever get the chance to do.”³⁵⁷ Another of Freeman Tilden’s six principles of interpretation is that “the chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.”³⁵⁸ This site, and the negative associations that cling to it, have provoked the neighborhood for decades and have had an impact on the image of the Museum. The tumultuous history is something that can be leveraged to engage with individuals during visits, as a tool to draw them in for that initial visit, and as a way to educate visitors about the truth of the man, the stories, the management, and its place in Atlanta.

³⁵⁶ Peggy from Colorado on November 4, 2017

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60898-d144315-Reviews-Wren_s_Nest-Atlanta_Georgia.html

³⁵⁷ Lain Shakespeare, "Interview with Former Executive Director of the Wren's Nest and Great-Grand Child of Joel Chandler Harris," In person interview by author, October 27, 2017.

³⁵⁸ Freeman Tilden, and R. Bruce, Craig. *Interpreting our heritage*. 34.

Point 4. It is a sociable place; one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.

The Wren's Nest could be a unique and important fixture in Atlanta. It has the potential to be a successful and valued Third Space, and serve as a sociable place for the community in the West End and Atlanta. While not yet realized, plans are in place that could actualize the Strategic Plan's reference to Vision 2021.

Concluding Thoughts

Already identified limitations of this study include the lack of interviews with African Americans and whites who lived in the West End and Atlanta during different managerial eras. Qualitative investigation of their thoughts about the Museum and Joel Chandler Harris, their experiences in visiting, and their perceptions of the stories, is worthy of a deeper phenomenological study. Interviewing the storytellers at the Wren's Nest about their experiences telling the *Uncle Remus* stories would provide additional anecdotal evidence regarding visitor experiences as well as their own personal experiences in telling the tales. Further investigation of the demographic and economic changes taking place in the West End would provide more insight into the Museum's place in the community.

Museums have the capability to influence individuals and communities, for better and worse. The Wren's Nest has done both. First, as a home to Joel Chandler Harris, arguably one of the more progressive men at the turn of the twentieth century. It would have been reasonable to expect that as Atlanta's first house museum it would reflect his views on race; yet once acquired as a museum to

commemorate him, the policies of the House's management served to tarnish his image. Since the 1980s the efforts to rebrand the site as an inclusive entity have been slow, but steady. Numerous opportunities exist for the Wren's Nest to be appreciated as a valued cultural landmark that preserves African American folklore, embraced by the West End and Atlanta as an influential community space, seen as an educational center for the reclaimed stories, and as a site that supports honest dialog.

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APPENDIX A

Yelp Reviews for The Wren's Nest ³⁵⁹			
Reviewer	Date	Rating	Selected Comment
Rachel from Chicago, IL	February 11, 2009	5/5	"I look for things to do that are educational and inexpensive. I've been to bars, restaurants, plays, the whole bit in many cities. But it's not enough. I want to learn more about the place I'm visiting. The history, the culture, the people. The Wren's Nest is one of those places."
M.A. from Atlanta, GA	April 11, 2010	5/5	"Well worth the trip to visit for visitors and natives alike - especially since many natives have never been. It's not just for history buffs; everyone can take something away from spending time at this well-preserved piece of Atlanta history (which anyone will tell you - it's rare for Atlanta to preserve its history). Go!"
Heather from Richmond, VA	December 4, 2010	4/5	"I loved the Brer Rabbit stories as a child-it was great to hear them again, and learn about the ties to traditional African stories, and author Joel

³⁵⁹ B., Kristin, J. S., Tim C., Bob J., John E., Emily G., Allison J., Stefanie C., Nicole G., Heather N., J. W., M. A., Michelle Z., and Rachel W. "Wren's Nest House Museum - West End - Atlanta, GA." Yelp. April 21, 2013. Accessed January 31, 2018. <https://www.yelp.com/biz/wrens-nest-house-museum-atlanta>.

			Chandler Harris' dedication to equality... Get there early to get a good seat for the storytelling!"
John from Atlanta, GA	February 6, 2011	5/5	"The tour for us was made complete via a storytelling session provided by a volunteer storyteller - make sure you arrange your times to take this in as it's a real treat. The storyteller we had recreated some of the Uncle Remus tales for us using expressions and techniques mostly forgotten in today's high tech, 3D, over-produced Hollywood era."
Emily from Tempe, AZ	March 14, 2011	4/5	"The best thing about the Wrens nest is definitely story telling time... Great way to spend a Saturday afternoon, and actually learn something. Yay!"
Michelle from Augusta, GA	January 16, 2012	5/5	"The Wren's Nest is a wonderful place to visit. I took a group of teenagers there. They loved the story-telling and were fascinated by the tour".
Nicole from Atlanta, GA	May 28, 2012	4/5	"This is one of those Atlanta landmarks that isn't quite on everyone's radar but is pretty cool... My boyfriend and I had been meaning to go for years but were scared we'd be out of place with no kids."
J.W. from Newnan,	August 18, 2012	1/5	J.W. provided a long explanation

GA			of how no storyteller showed up. "The management was very apologetic and embarrassed but there wasn't much they could do. Very disappointing."
Kristen from Atlanta, GA	April 21, 2013	4/5	"I highly recommend this spot, which is truly a hidden gem of Atlanta, Southern, and literary history."
Stephanie from New York, NY	August 1, 2014	5/5	"The tour was so informative and interesting and the house was beautiful! It was low-key and lovely!"
Allison from Atlanta, GA	March 28, 2015	5/5	"The tour guide, Nannie, is a treasure. The Wren's Nest is worth the trip just to see her. Very interesting tour and lovely home."
Tim from Honolulu, HI	August 5, 2015	2/5	"Let's not be too generous in what is essentially a house that costs \$8 a head to walk thru... Watch out for the neighborhood, it looks very dodgy. Sorry, I was really hoping this would be a cool old museum/ story place / house. We will not return or recommend to others with kids."
Bob from Spring, TX	October 26, 2015	4/5	"Very authentic, very original home (with pictures to prove it!) that has been a museum for over 100 years. Not a lot of emphasis on the Braer stories,

			<p>which may have something to do with Disney buying the rights for Song of the South...Even though they host events, I suspect they struggle financially being located off-the-beaten-path - - so spend the \$8 knowing you are helping preserve a bit of the old south."</p>
<p>J.S. from Decatur, GA</p>	<p>October 21, 2017</p>	<p>3/5</p>	<p>I've been before and was disappointed that the museum was not in great shape.</p>