

African American Quilt Documentation Project 2018 Culminates with an addition to the Downtown Sculpture Walk

Installation of the “Pathways to Freedom” sculpture was the culmination of a collaboration between many local non profits and government organizations. It was unveiled on May 10, 2018.

The idea for the sculpture was the result of intertwining objectives that began as a side project for partic-



ipants in the annual George Washington Carver “Memories” Day (the 4th Saturday in February). The original purpose of “Memories” Day was to collect personal historical accounts from those persons who “remembered” having either been to the park or been part of its creation as it was the first “Georgia State Park for Negroes” <http://visitcartersvillega.org/gwcp/> . Its very existence was a big step in civil rights and its stories were fading with time.

Also potentially fading with time were family quilts that can often relate meaning beyond fabric, batting and stitch. By “Memories Day” in February of 2018 these two objectives

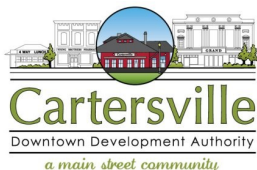
had become acquainted and all the historical groups involved were encouraged to exhibit a quilt.

(Representatives of these groups became the AAQDP or African American Quilt Documentation Project.) Teresa Cook (local quilter and member of the Etowah Valley Quilt Guild) was on hand at the request of the Etowah Valley Historical Society (Mina Harper). As a local quilt expert, she helped the Bartow History Museum curate these hand made gems by identifying patterns and estimating their age. Teresa had also found patterns that could have held special meanings according to some oral histories, a way of communicating important messages to escaping slaves. She formed these squares together creating the inspiration for the final piece of artwork. Members of the AAQDP and their organizations solicited funds to commission the sculpture from artist Przemyslaw Kordys'. Sufficient funds were collected so that the sculpture could become the cornerstone for yet another local project—the Downtown “Art Walk” (a project of the Cartersville Downtown Development Association.) “Pathways to Freedom: A Story in Every Stitch” became the first installation in this art-centric goal for the City of Cartersville’s downtown. It was installed prominently in front of Cartersville City Hall. The AAQDP com-

mittee consisted of City of Cartersville, Cartersville DDA, Keep Bartow Beautiful, Noble Hill Wheeler Memorial Center, Bartow History Museum, Cartersville Bartow Visitors Bureau, Etowah Valley Historical Society, Euharlee Historical Society, Kingston Women’s History club, NAACP, Quilt Artist Teresa Cook, and Summer Hill Heritage Museum. Donors and Committee members are listed on next page.



African American Quilt
Documentation Project of Bartow County





African American Quilt

Documentation Project of Bartow County

Thank You to the donors who made this project possible

Barry Henderson

Bartow County Government

Bartow History Museum

Cartersville Downtown
Development Authority

Cartersville-Bartow County
Convention & Visitors Bureau

Charles & Vyola Foster *in memory
of our slave ancestors, Niles and Riley*

City of Adairsville

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Mac Eppinger & Sons Funeral Service,
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Mina Harper *in grateful appreciation
for all who worked on this project*

NAACP / Greater New Fellowship
Missionary Baptist Church

Noble Hill-Wheeler Foundation

Steel Materials, Inc.

Summer Hill Heritage Group

AAQDP Committee Members

Adairsville DDA (Molly Smith), African American Heritage Trail (Sheri Henshaw), Bartow History Museum (Trey Gaines), Cartersville Bartow Visitors Bureau (Ellen Archer), City of Cartersville (Matt Santini), Etowah Valley Historical Society (Mina Harper, - Chair, Dianne Tate), Euharlee Historical Society (Barbara Ford), Keep Bartow Beautiful (Missy Phillips), Kingston Women's History Club (Ann Bridges), Noble Hill Wheeler Memorial Center (Valerie Coleman, Marion Coleman, Rev. Louise Young Harris, Willie Wofford) Quilt Artist (Teresa Cook), Summer Hill Heritage Musueum (Calvin Cooley, Elmer Henderson, Charles Foster), NAACP (The Reverend WJE Coombs)

The Daily Tribune News

Posted Tuesday, May 8, 2018

By Marie Nesmith

"Commissioned as a gift to the community," the first piece of the downtown Cartersville Art Walk will be unveiled to the public Thursday. Starting at 2 p.m., the ceremony for the "Pathways to Freedom: A Story in Every Stitch" sculpture will be presented on the grounds of Cartersville City Hall.

"I am thrilled about this sculpture coming to fruition," Cartersville Downtown Development Authority Manager Lillie Read said. "The goal of this rotating sculpture walk project has always been to increase the amount of public art that is available downtown. ... I encourage the public to attend the unveiling ceremony because these pieces of art are being placed downtown specifically so the community can see and interact with them.

"In the case of 'Pathways to Freedom,' which is a permanent installation, the unveiling also represents the culmination of a lot of hard work and effort by the African-American Quilt Documentation Project of Bartow County (AAQDP) as this piece was specifically commissioned as a gift to the community. The unveiling will include a candle-lighting ceremony, introductions of the committee members, some musical performances, and author Phyllis Lawson will be telling about her own history with quilting and the stories that are imbued in every stitch."

To be permanently installed on the city's property at the corner of Cherokee Avenue and North Public Square, sculptor P. Kordys' "Pathways to Freedom" is nearly 9 feet tall and features a design of nine metal quilt blocks.

According to promotional materials from the AAQDP, "The sculpture symbolizes the hopes and dreams of slaves before emancipation to gain their freedom, to own oneself. According to folklore surrounding attempts to escape, the oral tradition purports that quilts played an important role in a secret communication to aid in the servant's flight from bondage. ... The quilts were hung on a fence or hedgerow, presumably to air, giving messages to the escapee that were hidden in plain sight. Negro spirituals are of the same vernacular with their double meaning.

"The sculpture depicts the most essential 'road signs' in this scenario. It pays homage to all the generations of slaves who are the forebears of most of the Bartow County African-American population. It attests to all, present and future generations of U.S. citizens, that American history includes slavery, that a slave's freedom was based in escape. The monument memorializes those with the courage and cunning to risk great peril if caught to seek self-determination. They are the pioneers of emancipation."

For the “Pathways to Freedom” sculpture to be installed permanently, the AAQDP is continuing to out to the public for support and funding. The group is tasked with raising \$6,000 — \$1,000 of which will repay the city of Cartersville's loan.

To place a financial donation for the sculpture, checks — with the designation "Freedom Monument" — can be made out to Cartersville Downtown Development Authority, 1 Friendship Plaza, Cartersville, GA 30120; or Summer Hill Heritage Group, P.O. Box 1761, Cartersville, GA 30120.

Following Thursday's ceremony, additional components of the Cartersville Art Walk will be unveiled Saturday from 2 to 2:30 p.m. at the Downtown Fine Art Market.

"The unveiling on May 10 is specific to 'Pathways to Freedom,' but on May 12 the larger sculpture walk project of which it is a part will be unveiled to the public during the Downtown Fine Art Market," Read said. "Two other sculptures, 'Element of Reason' and 'Mesa Man,' both by Eric Strauss, will be introduced to the public and on display for the following two years.

"'Mesa Man' is a loan from the collection of the Booth museum and will return there after its display period," Read said, adding the sculpture will be located in the Founder's Oak parking area near Cherokee Avenue and the train tracks while the sculpture is part of the Cartersville Art Walk. "However, 'Elements of Reason,' which will be on display in Friendship Plaza, will be available for purchase at the end of its display period. The piece can be purchased for a private collection or for display in downtown or elsewhere in the city or county. The ultimate goal is to support artists and get more art into the community."

The Daily Tribune News

Cartersville Art Walk's first piece highlights African-American heritage



The Rev. W.J.E. Coombs, the Rev. Louise Young Harris and Calvin Cooley, behind Harris, prepare to unveil the "Pathways to Freedom: A Story in Every Stitch" sculpture Thursday in downtown Cartersville.

RANDY PARKER/THE DAILY TRIBUNE NEWS

Posted Sunday, May 13, 2018

BY MARIE NESMITH

Calling the unveiling a "once-in-a-lifetime event," Calvin Cooley was thrilled to welcome "Pathways to Freedom: A Story in Every Stitch" to downtown Cartersville. The first permanent work in Cartersville's Art Walk, the sculpture highlights African-American heritage and the journey from slavery to liberty.

"To be a native Cartersvillian — born and raised here — and to see the progress [thus] far and to be a part of it, is beyond anything I could have imagined," said Cooley, a member of Cartersville City Council and chairman of the board for Summer Hill Heritage Museum. "I am so proud of Cartersville, Georgia, and the things they're doing in our community for everybody."



Artist Przemyslaw Kordys' and Mina Harper

"It's hard to put into words, but the way [that] life is in Cartersville, it doesn't surprise me," he said, giving his perspective as an African American on "Pathways to Freedom" being the first Art Walk piece to be publicly unveiled. "We've always been progressive and on the front end of things. This is just a natural outgrowth of the unity [and forward thinking] of the people of Cartersville." Situated on the corner of Cartersville City Hall's grounds at Cherokee Avenue and North Public Square, sculptor Przemyslaw Kordys' "Pathways to Freedom" is nearly 9 feet tall and features a design of nine metal quilt blocks.

The piece's conceptualization and design work was spearheaded by the African-American Quilt Documentation Project of Bartow County. Led by Mina Harper, the group's steering committee members and the organizations they represent include Mollie Smith, Adairsville Downtown Development Authority; Mayor Matt Santini, city of Cartersville; Sheri Henshaw, Keep Bartow Beautiful; Valerie Coleman, Marian Coleman and the Rev. Louise Young Harris — Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center; Trey Gaines, Bartow History Museum; the Rev. W.J.E. Coombs, Bartow County branch of the NAACP; Ellen Archer, Cartersville-Bartow County Convention & Visitors Bureau; Dianne Tate, Etowah



Valley Historical Society; Barbara Ford, Euharlee Historical Society; Anne Jones, Kingston Woman's History Club; Teresa Cook, Etowah Valley Quilt Guild; and Cooley, Charles Foster and Elmer Felton Henderson — Summer Hill Heritage Museum.

"When we come together as a viewer [of art] ... all of our differences go away, and we are enjoying [the art-work]," Harper told the crowd during Thursday's unveiling ceremony. "We are experiencing unity with each other as the viewers. So it is a work of art, and it's historical. ... It's in a quilt motif. Those blocks have conventional names as churn dash, wagon wheel, carpenter's wheel, bear claw. But according to legend, they mean much more than just that. So this sculpture symbolizes the hopes and dreams of generations of humanity under bondage and their desire for a self-determination, self-realization to freedom.

"It's been educational to me, not just because of that narrative but working with it. Looking at slavery has enabled me to ... acknowledge it and, I believe, talk with African Americans about slavery easier than before. ... It was a hard subject to approach, but this sculpture enables us to look at our history, to accept it and to move on. It represents a vision to the future and hope for the future



Author Phyllis Lawson speaks about her book



Author Phyllis Lawson signs her books

and [a] message of unity."

As Harper noted, the nine quilt blocks in the sculpture depict secret messages that were relayed during the time of slavery. To the casual viewer, the quilts contain traditional patterns, but to those escaping northward, they presented coded signs of assistance on their journey to freedom.

"The design — each [block] tells a story, and that's the important thing," Cooley said. "The design at the top of the quilt is the North Star. All slaves were taught to follow the North Star going north to find freedom. Then there's one on the corner, a bear claw, telling you what path to take.

"... [Quilts] were hung out in plain sight," he said, referring to quilts containing designs, like those highlighted in the "Pathways to Free-

dom" sculpture. "If you didn't know ... their meaning, they didn't mean nothing to you. But for the ones escaping, that was their pathway to freedom."

Along with singing provided by Ahmad Hall, the unveiling ceremony recognized Kordys and included presentations from author Phyllis Lawson and numerous AAQDP steering committee members. During the gathering, Cartersville Downtown Development Authority Manager Lillie Read also accepted a \$4,000 check from the AAQDP for the sculpture's installation.

For the "Pathways to Freedom" monument to be installed permanently, the AAQDP is continuing to reach out to the public for support and funding. The group is tasked with raising \$6,000 — \$1,000 of which will repay the city of Cartersville's loan.

To place a financial donation for the sculpture, checks — with the designation "Freedom Monument" — can be made out to Cartersville Downtown Development Authority, 1 Friendship Plaza, Cartersville, GA 30120; or Summer Hill Heritage Group, P.O. Box 1761, Cartersville, GA 30120.

Following Thursday's ceremony, the Art Walk's other works were unveiled publicly Saturday during the Downtown Cartersville Fine Art Market. Both created by Eric Strauss, "Element of Reason" and "Mesa Man" will be featured at Friendship Plaza and near the Founder's Oak parking area, respectively, for two years. While "Mesa Man" is on loan from the Booth Western Art Museum's collection, "Element of Reason" will be available for purchase following the Art Walk.

Supported partially by a grant from the Georgia Council for the Arts, the Art Walk looks to rotate pieces every two years and feature different types of art forms.

"It was incredible," Read said about the unveiling of "Pathways to Freedom." "It was uplifting. It was inspiring. It felt fantastic. I was really happy to see all of this come together. The speed with which it all manifested was incredible. ... To see how the community responded to this and knowing that energy was behind it, made it extra special to see this unveiled.

"I would encourage folks to come see it, because it offers them a different way to see and engage with their



community. It gives them a little insight into history. ... Since I've seen these pieces up, I really [have] enjoyed seeing the conversations that have evolved from them. ... It's just a neat, different way to experience the city."

Along with the Art Walk, "Pathways to Freedom" also will connect with another community effort that currently is in the planning stages.

"I have become engaged in this [sculpture] project ... through my work in community development for Bartow County, with the Bartow Black History Trail Project — a driving tour of 10 historic sites that extend north and south, east and west to Bartow County's borders," Henshaw said. "Three of the sites proposed for the trail by Georgia Supreme Court Justice Robert Benham, a history buff and local resident who spearheaded this project, are near downtown Cartersville on Erwin Street and Aubrey Street/Summer Hill community.

"The goals of this community development project are to uncover, record, preserve and showcase the history of each site, [and] present it to the public in various forms, such as through directional and informational signage, enhanced programming, increased interpretive staffing, a driving tour brochure and map, and [an] online app for smartphones with website links. We also plan to tie in to other sites, in this case

downtown Cartersville, for additional and necessary tourist travel amenities, such as gas, lodging, dining, shopping and more."

The 10 sites included on the proposed Bartow Black History Trail are: Butler's Shoe Store in Adairsville; Melvinia "Mattie" Shields McGruder's monument in the Kingston Cemetery; Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center and St. James AME Church in Cassville; Euharlee Covered Bridge and Black Pioneers Cemetery in Euharlee; Vinnie's Cabin, Summer Hill and Masonic Building in Cartersville; and George Washington Carver Park in Acworth.



Park in Acworth.

"We also hope to extend their stay by offering more of the same that first captured their interest, in the way of African-American history," Henshaw said. "We have done that through several means, such as a grant we received — cosponsored by EVHS and Cartersville DDA — to create a downtown walking tour of African-American businesses from 1870-1940. The AAQDP quilt sculpture will tie in not only to the driving and walking tours, it will also add nicely to the Bartow History Museum's place on the official Georgia Textile Trail, where the South has a rich history and many other stories to share.

"From cotton gins to textile mill villages, to the chenille spreads of Peacock Alley and the carpet industry, we have

overlapping stories that draw visitors to our community, increase tourism revenue and reduce local taxes. I would love to see a quilt shop, fabric or textiles shop here in Cartersville or one of our smaller communities, such as Adairsville, also on the textile trail, to provide a resource for the many quilt guilds in the area. This one sculpture can serve many purposes, and in this way serve to connect those communities."