



Master of Historic Preservation Program

College of Environment + Design

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Spring 2026 Alumni Newsletter





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Welcome!

Welcome to the Spring 2026 Edition of the UGA Historic Preservation Program Newsletter!

After a short hiatus, we're back and better than ever with exciting program news, student spotlights, and project updates! The program has seen many changes and has grown significantly over the last three years. This past year, students have participated in projects both within and outside of the program, and they have continued to engage with Georgia communities while learning about all that historic preservation entails.

This newsletter is in memory of the late Dr. Stephen Ramos, a dear friend, advisor, and colleague to many.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?



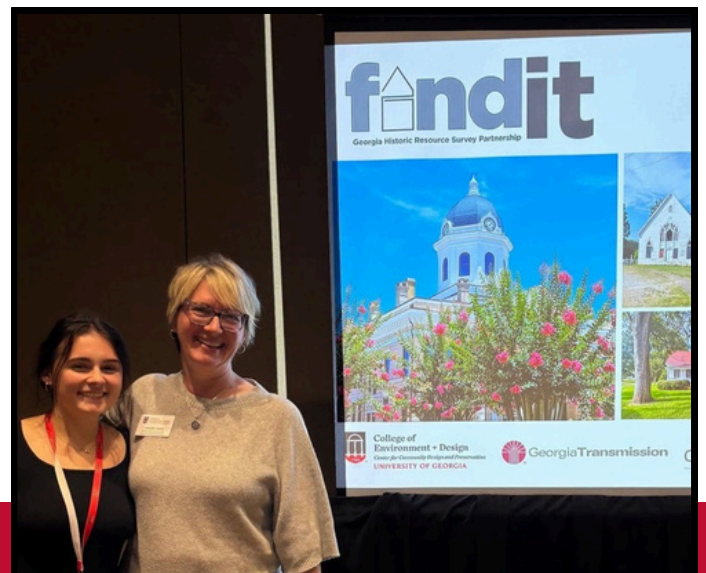
Session Highlight: Survey Options for Local Government

Jennifer Lewis (MHP '02), Director of the Center for Community Design and Preservation, and second-year Hayden Dutton sat on a panel where they talked about the FindIt program's achievements (see photo below).

Georgia Statewide Historic Preservation Conference

This past fall, the Georgia Statewide Historic Preservation Conference was from November 5th to 7th in our very own Athens, GA! Hosted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Historic Preservation Division and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, the conference brought professionals from across the region for a series of talks, panels, and tours. All of our current students attended all three days. Each student was also given the chance to introduce a session or panel.

Several students and recent graduates presented posters, and faculty member Cari Goetcheus led a talk and tour during the week. Instructors Joe Smith and Chris Jackson led and participated in sessions, and Professor Emeritus James Reap moderated a session.





Letter from the SHPO President

My name is Brynn Hungerford, and I am a second-year MHP student graduating this May. This past school year, I served as the Student Historic Preservation Organization's '25-'26 club president. SHPO is more than just a club for MHPs, and our focus this year was all about opening up our club to people outside of the MHP program.

We hosted a networking panel for the 2025 Georgia Statewide Preservation Conference, a talk about the preservation of the UGA President's House, and a tour of the TRR Cobb House. We also hosted events aimed at connecting with our members, like our game night, fall potluck, and Study and Build night on Reading Day. I am so grateful to have served in this role, and I am thankful for my leadership team of Tillman Norsworthy, Savanna Davis, and Reagan Smith. I am so proud of all we have accomplished together and I cannot wait to see what the next leadership team does.



Preservation Perspectives: Charleston, SC

For the program's annual Preservation Perspectives field study, students and faculty traveled to Charleston, SC. Planned by Professor Cari Goetcheus, this year's 3-day trip had students meet with nonprofits such as the Historic Charleston Foundation and the Preservation Society of Charleston, federal agencies such as the National Park Service and the US Forest Service, and local partners such as Middleton Place and Charleston County Parks. We even got to have lunch with our colleagues at the Clemson Design Center. Next year, catch us in Savannah, GA!

FACULTY UPDATES

A Year in Retirement

Last spring we said goodbye as two of our long-time faculty, Professor James Reap and Dr. Wayde Brown, retired. But trust us, retirement has kept them busy, and they can't stay away for too long!

Professor Reap started teaching at the University of Georgia in the early-2000s, and he served as the director of the MHP program for over 10 years. In his first year as Professor Emeritus, James Reap was elected as Vice President of the US National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), gave presentations on looting and trafficking of cultural heritage and the US Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act at Rutgers University Law School and internationally, and conducted training on preservation law, procedures and ethics for the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions.

Dr. Brown also started in the MHP program in the early-2000s and was a pillar of the program. His first year as Professor Emeritus was spent presenting a conference paper in Finland, exploring Nova Scotia, and doing non-preservation things that he now has the time for! His book recommendation for the summer is *Holly* by Stephen King, a story of two retired professors who, and I quote from Dr. Brown himself, “do bad things in their basement.”





New Committee Member on the Block!

This fall, Assistant Professor Dr. Katie Marages was appointed to the Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission. In her position, she will review and approve designs that affect Athens' historic structures and districts. She will serve in her role until June 2026. Congratulations, Dr. Marages!

Welcome Back!

Heather Benham (MHP/JD '03), a partner at Burlington Associates, taught the Preservation Law course this past fall. After graduating with her MHP/JD, Heather worked at the Athens Land Trust for over twenty years, having served as their Executive Director for eleven of those!

Chris Jackson (MHP '18), founder of local preservation firm Verity Works, taught the Fall 2025 section of the Building Materials Conservation course. The students produced Historic Structure Reports for homes in the historic mill village of Porterdale, GA. Check out our Project Updates section for more info!



STUDENT UPDATES

Congratulations to Our Spring Thesis Defenders!

- **Augustine Amam**, *Reviving Ghana's Forgotten Forts: Integrating Lesser-known Sites into Cultural Heritage Tourism*
- **Abbi Byrd**, *Framing Disaster: Hurricane Katrina, News Media, and Preservation in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward*
- **Elijah Bell**
- **Savanna Davis**, *Keeping Kolomoki Alive: Defining Best Interpretation Practices at Mound Sites in the Southeast*
- **Hayden Dutton**, *The Mystique of Madness: Analyzing the Fate of an American Psychiatric Asylum with a European Lens*
- **Brynn Hungerford**, *Blazing through History: A look into the Preservation of the Appalachian Trail Through Five Case Studies*
- **Cro Osborne**, *Haunted Historic Site Interpretation: Moving Towards Best Practices in Savannah, Georgia's Thanatourism*
- **McKenna White**, *Does Y'all Really Mean All?: The National Register and LGBTQ+ Preservation in the Southeast*

Summer and Fall Graduates

- Nicholas Dietz, Summer 2025
- Alexis Robinson, Summer 2025
- Olivia Roger, Summer 2025
- Catherine Russell, Summer 2025
- William Godat, Fall 2025
- Katie Mino, Fall 2025
- Nadia Naji, Fall 2025



Some of our Spring 2026 graduates at the College of Environment and Design's graduation ceremony!



Summer Plans

UGA Cultural Landscapes Laboratory

Professor Cari Goetcheus received a grant from the Richard Hampton Jenrette Foundation to study the cultural landscape at the Millford National Historic Landmark in the midlands of South Carolina. Two first year students, Erika Wesch and Lily White, will conduct archival research and field work to determine the anthropogenic influences on the historic landscape, supervised by Professor Goetcheus.

FindIt

Seven first year students will be working with the Center for Community Design and Preservation's (CCDP) FindIt program over the summer and next school year.

Next Steps!

Summer in the Adirondacks

Reagan Smith will be spending the summer at Great Camp Santanoni and Santanoni Preserve in upstate New York working as an intern for Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH).

Internship at the Capitol

Abbi Byrd will be working with the Architect of the Capitol in Washington, DC as an Architectural Aide focusing on Historic Preservation and Real Property.

Headed Out West

Savanna Davis will be working in interpretation and recreation through AmeriCorps at the San Juan National Forest and Chimney Rock National Monument in Pagosa Springs, CO.

The students are excited for their detailed crash course in historic Georgia architecture this summer and to get their feet wet in the field of cultural resource management. Over the following two semesters, students will continue to work on their survey skills as they document historic houses across the state. Veteran FindIt surveyor and recent graduate McKenna White will be working with CCDP to support this year's group of students.

PROJECT UPDATES



Historic Athens Porchfest

During the fall semester, first year students in Dr. Katie Marages' Vernacular Architecture class researched and wrote house histories for houses featured in Historic Athens' annual Porchfest event. Started in 2019, Porchfest is a one-day music festival that takes place in Athens' historic neighborhoods. Members of the community volunteer the porches of their homes for band performances throughout the day.

Over the course of the semester, students completed deed work, archival research, and interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of their assigned houses. There was even a friendly competition among students in a collaboration with Professor Tom Jones' Preservation Graphics class to create a design for the informative yard signs, which second-year McKenna White won! This marked year three of our students participating in the event.



McKenna's design at a Porchfest house!



Course Highlight: Building Material Conservation

This academic year, Building Material Conservation was taught in both the Fall and Spring semester. Professor Chris Jackson taught the Fall section, while Professor Joe Smith taught the Spring section. Both sections engaged the students with unique, real-world projects.

Porterdale, GA

Students in the Fall Building Materials Conservation class conducted field work in the historic mill village of Porterdale to write their final Historic Structure Reports (HSRs). The town of Porterdale is one of the most intact mill villages in the state of Georgia, as most of the mill structures are still standing.

A development company that recently acquired a large amount of the historic area has plans to rehabilitate the mill houses into affordable housing, and the mill structures will be turned into collaborative office spaces. The information from students' completed HSRs will be used by the developers to make decisions on how to proceed with the rehabilitation of the historic houses on site.





Martin Luther King Historical Park and Buckhead, GA

Students in the Spring section of Building Materials Conservation had the opportunity to work with the Martin Luther King National Historical Park in Atlanta, GA on a semester long project. Students visited Atlanta multiple times over the course of the semester to conduct condition assessments of historic homes located in the historic Sweet Auburn neighborhood. Students completed Condition Assessment Reports (CARs) on the exteriors and interiors of multiple 1890s Folk Victorian houses. These CARs will be used to create preservation guides for the National Park Service to improve repair and maintenance strategies of this nationally significant historic district.

Students were also able to participate in multiple hands on workshops during the semester including a mortar analysis lab, a plaster and compo casting class, and a trip out to the town of Buckhead to repaint the historic townhall!





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