

SPECIAL EDITION

# HISTORIC AUGUSTA

*News*

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2025 ENDANGERED  
PROPERTIES LIST

# REASONS FOR ENDANGERMENT VARY

By Erick Montgomery, *Executive Director, Historic Augusta, Inc.*

Historic properties can be endangered in a number of different ways, and this year Historic Augusta's 2025 Endangered Properties List identifies nine situations that can lead to loss of historic resources. These include: (1) lack of protection, (2) development pressures, (3) unsympathetic public policy, (4) out-of-town ownership, (5) neglect, (6) vacancy, (7) poor maintenance, (8) heir properties, and (9) disinvestment. There is no one reason that causes a property to become vulnerable to demolition. And there is no one simple way to resolve the problems to ensure the endangered historic property's preservation.

One tool widely used by historic preservation organizations is accepting and holding preservation easements. These are legal obligations that require property owners, often in perpetuity, to maintain the building according to preservation standards. But even this tool can be challenging if an owner doesn't have the funds for the needed maintenance. Historic Augusta holds about 50 of these easements, and sometimes must intervene to ensure that proper preservation measures are taken.

Historic Augusta advocates for preserving historic properties of all kinds, and stands ready to advise owners of applicable programs that may lead to saving these vulnerable buildings from ultimate demolition. Once a historic property is razed, it is gone forever, and a piece of our irreplaceable history and architectural legacy is irrevocably lost.

The mission of Historic Augusta is to preserve historic sites and structures in Augusta and Richmond County. This is accomplished through preserving, protecting, educating, and advocating for preservation of our significant historic resources. Please join us in advocating for these and other historic resources in Augusta and the CSRA.



Historic Augusta holds a preservation easement on three cottages behind the former Widows Home, and is working with Christ Community Health, the current owner, to ensure their long term survival.

# EPL SCOREBOARD

SAVED	PROGRESS	NO CHANGE	THREATENED	DETERIORATING	LOST	TOTAL
<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>104</b>

202 Greene Street



**SAVED!**

**202 Greene Street.**  
2018 Endangered Properties List

Fifth Street Bridge



**SAVED!**

**Fifth Street Bridge.**  
2009 Endangered Properties List

Kahrs Grocery



**SAVED!**

**Kahrs Grocery,  
401 Greene Street.**  
2011 Endangered Properties List.  
A Certified Rehabilitation.

Union Lofts



**SAVED!**

**Union Lofts, 501, 507, and 513  
James Brown Boulevard.**  
2008 Endangered Properties List.  
A Certified Rehabilitation.

# 2024

## NEW ENDANGERED PROPERTIES LISTINGS

### SKINNER-GARDNER HOUSE

3202 Washington Road, moved to West and Skinner Road, West Augusta

Issues: no protections, vulnerable to development

One of the oldest houses in Richmond County, the old Skinner House at the northwest corner of Washington and Kings Chapel Roads at the entrance to Montclair subdivision, is a local landmark, recognizable by many people traveling to and from the Columbia County suburbs. For many years it was the home of local realtor, Carolyn Gardner, who died October 14, 2023. Although Miss Gardner was concerned that the plantation plain style house, dating to about 1810, may be lost unless it was moved, she made no definite provision for ensuring its preservation in her estate planning. The remaining three-acre lot upon which it sits is prime real estate, making it vulnerable to development, and her heirs quickly sold it after her demise.

Having no historic designation that offered protection for the property, and not wanting to see the historic house destroyed, Billie Hunter, a cousin of Miss Gardner's, arranged to move the house to a lot at the northwest corner of Skinner Road and West Road, not far from its original location. Mrs. Hunter and her family are planning a restoration of the old house on the new site, and have prepared the lot for the same. The new location is on original Skinner family land.

We originally planned to list the Skinner-Gardner House on our 2025 Endangered Properties List, but developments have changed our concerns since the old landmark house would not be lost. Although preserving historic properties in their original location and setting is the ideal, moving historic buildings as a last resort to saving them is better than losing them forever. We look forward to following the restoration progress on this highly significant Richmond County landmark and extend our thanks to Mrs. Hunter for saving a rare and beautiful early Richmond County farmhouse.

This is a reminder that protections for preserving historic buildings through historic preservation easements, or through designation by the Augusta Historic Preservation Ordinance can be excellent tools to ensure historic buildings can be saved. If not for Mrs. Hunter's concern and action, the Skinner House would likely have been razed and lost forever.



## C. T. WALKER SCHOOL

1301 Wrightsboro Road, Laney-Walker/Bethlehem  
Issues: unsympathetic public policy

In 1934 the Charles T. Walker School was completed, the largest of 11 new schools that were built by the Richmond County Board of Education through a bond referendum that generated over a million dollars. Supplementing those funds were Great Depression era Public Works Administration (P.W.A.) funds.

Designed by noted Augusta architect Willis Irvin, and built by Griffin Construction Company of Atlanta, the school cost \$154,000 in 1930s dollars. Initially called simply the Fourth Ward Colored School, it was the pride of the African American community, and named for the beloved pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church. Originally it was a neighborhood elementary school. In 1980 it became the first magnet school in Richmond County, and has consistently ranked among the top performing schools in Georgia.

In 2023 the Richmond County Board of Education announced a program of consolidation, and school closings for the coming year. Among the schools to be moved is C. T. Walker, which is proposed to go to Tubman School on Walton Way. Further, the venerable and highly significant Walker School on Wrightsboro Road will be razed, and the grounds repurposed as recreational and athletic fields for the nearby A. R. Johnson School, which will be turned into Murphey Middle School.

Much opposition to this plan with regard to C. T. Walker School has been raised by parents and neighborhood advocates. Over the years much funding has gone into expanding and updating Walker, some as recently as 2005 and 2019. This public policy will waste a perfectly sound, and well-built historic school building in Augusta that can continue to be used, instilling pride in its students and faculty. We urge the school board to reconsider its plan, and retain this significant historic school that has been a symbol of educational progress for 90 years.

Charles T. Walker Traditional Magnet School



## 412 SECOND STREET, OLDE TOWN

Issues: out-of-town ownership, vacancy, neglect

Representative of many modest but substantial houses in the Olde Town neighborhood of Augusta is 412 Second Street. Built before the turn of the 20th Century, it has sheltered many working-class families for over a century. It was sometimes rental property, and sometimes owner occupied. It's original full-width front porch was reduced to a simple covered stoop sometime in the mid-20th Century, but still retains some of its original Victorian decorative millwork. In 2009 it was sold to an investor who now lives out-of-town. The house, now vacant, is in a slow state of decline and neglect, and is overgrown with vines and vegetation. It is open from the rear, allowing squatters and homeless people to enter, making it vulnerable to further damage and fire.

Discussions with officials at Christ Community Health Care, located directly behind it between Telfair and Greene Streets, recently brought this house to our attention as we are considering the adjacent vacant lot for a new use. Unfortunately there are many properties like this one in Olde Town, that with proper care, rehab and maintenance could provide shelter for families again. In its current state, it becomes susceptible to vagrancy, homeless occupation, and is a potential fire hazard, not only to this house but others nearby. Ideally the house will be rehabilitated, respecting its original design, and become an asset to its owner and to the city's tax rolls.



412 Second Street in 2020



412 Second Street today, showing significant deterioration and neglect in four years.

## OLD FIFTH WARD SCHOOL

644 Crawford Avenue, Harrisburg

Issues: vacancy, poor maintenance, neglect

Built in the 1880s, this building originally served as the *Grammar School* for the Harrisburg community, where many employees of Sibley and King Mills and working class families lived. The school was originally erected at 1734 Telfair Street. After John Milledge School was built in 1908, the Fifth Ward School was no longer needed and was moved to its present location at 644 Crawford Avenue in about 1920. It was converted into flats for rent at that time. When it was moved, the rear wing was separated from the front parts, being moved to 828 and 830 Crawford Avenue, and made into two large single-family homes.

Over the years, the larger part of the Old Fifth Ward School in its new location has had hard usage, and is now vacant and neglected. Poor maintenance invites vagrancy, and abuse. Yet it is still solid and could be improved in a sympathetic manner that would preserve its unique history, reclaiming its original dignity. As a contributing structure in the Harrisburg-West End Historic District, the building would qualify for historic preservation tax incentives for a certified rehabilitation. Currently owned by the Augusta Land Bank Authority, we hope it will be preserved and rehabbed in the very near future.

Fifth Ward School on Telfair Street in 1901,  
before it was moved.



Old Fifth Ward School today,  
showing serious neglect.



## BUTT-KELLY-SULLIVAN HOUSE

2131 Gardner Street, Summerville

Issues: Heir property, neglect

Built about 1902 by members of the Butt Family, of whom Archibald W. Butt of our memorial bridge fame was a member, this fine brick house is on the prominent corner of Gardner Street and Milledge Road near the Augusta Country Club. Since the late 1930s it has been in the same family after it was purchased by Dr. G. Lombard Kelly, eminent physician, and one-time Dean of the Medical College of Georgia. Later it was the home of Dr. Daniel B. Sullivan, another accomplished physician who married Dr. Kelly's daughter. Since 2009 it has been vacant, and is slowly falling into disrepair, particularly after the extensive hail storm that damaged so many homes in Summerville in 2022.

Historic homes are often the focus of sentiment, and when families members pass on, and no one is left to regularly care for or maintain a property, it becomes vulnerable. Heir properties are one of the most difficult historic preservation issues to solve, and often once proud dwellings gradually become eyesores from lack of attention. It is far better for the preservation of a home to sell a property to a new owner who is eager to restore and maintain a historic house, than to allow it to continue to deteriorate. One of the worst scenarios for any historic building is to sit vacant and neglected over a long period of time. We note that this house has recently been placed on the market. We hope it will sell soon and someone will return it to the lovely home that it was for over 100 years.



Butt-Kelly-Sullivan House

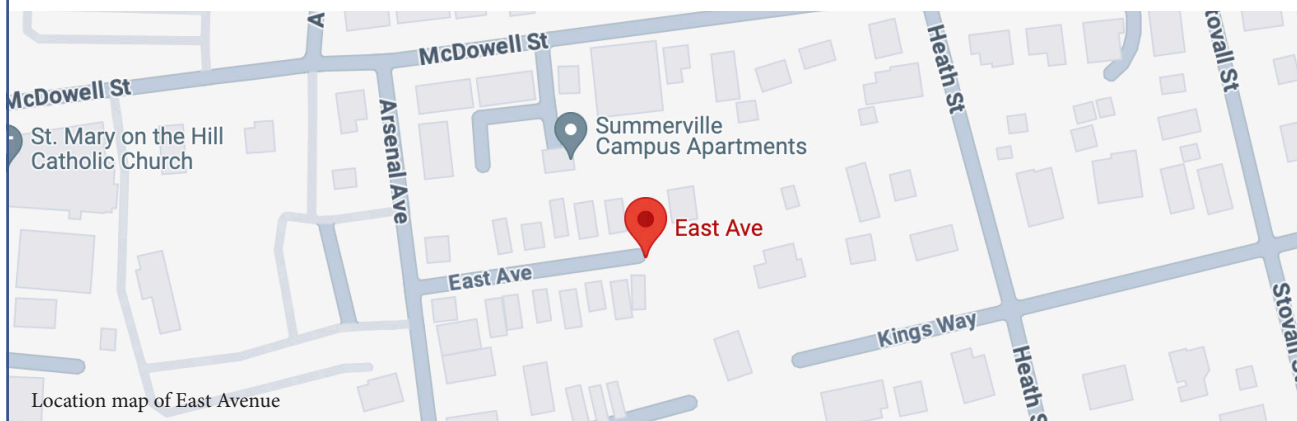
# EAST AVENUE SUMMERVILLE

Issues: Poor maintenance, disinvestment

East Avenue is a short, one-block street in the heart of Summerville. It's off Arsenal Avenue between McDowell Street and Central Avenue. Historic Augusta recently moved the nearby Fordyce-Kennedy House to a vacant lot there, and continues to work with the owner of the lot to bring about its long-term preservation.

But in the move, the needs of East Avenue were brought into focus, since most are poorly maintained. The remaining houses there are small shotgun style dwellings dating from the early twentieth century. They were built for domestic workers who were mostly employed by the owners of the larger homes that surrounded them on all sides. Currently most of the houses are relatively sound, but need rehabilitation to ensure their long-term preservation.

This small neighborhood has suffered by disinvestment over the decades. Being so close to Augusta University's Summerville Campus, student housing comes to mind as being ideal for this street. Augusta has a need for modest housing like these, but improvements on East Avenue should be made soon. Historic Augusta continues to work with the owners, and looks forward to the day when these small houses with so much potential will be restored as aesthetically pleasing assets in the Summerville Historic District.



# UPCOMING EVENTS!

Mark you Calendars!

## Edward J Cashin Memorial Woodrow Wilson Symposium: "Saving Our History"

**November 14-16, 2024**

**Morris Museum of Art, 1 Tenth Street, Augusta, Georgia**

### Speakers:

- **November 14** – Richard Kurin, PhD, Smithsonian Institution, "American History in 101 Objects"
- **November 15** – Melissa DeVelvis, PhD, Augusta University, "Saving Mount Vernon"
- **November 16** – Greg Jacobs, Landmark Preservation, "Saving Meadow Garden"
- **November 16** - Corey Rogers, Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History, "Saving the Lucy Craft Laney House"
- **November 16** – Erick Montgomery, Historic Augusta, "Saving Woodrow Wilson's Boyhood Home"



## The Boyhood Home of President Woodrow Wilson: Christmas Candlelight Tours

**December 6-7, 2024**

**5:30-7:30 P.M.**

**419 Seventh Street, Augusta, Georgia**

The 1860s era manse will be decorated for the season  
Guided tours, live period music, refreshments.

\$15 for Adults

\$12 for Seniors and Military

\$10 for youth 18 and under

## Daily Holiday Tours in December

**Wednesdays – Saturdays**

**10:00 A.M., 11:00 A.M., 1:00 P.M., 2:00 P.M., 3:00 P.M., 4:00 P.M.**

\*Guided tours begin on the hour

**Closed:** Thanksgiving Day (Thursday, November 28), Christmas Day (Wednesday, December 25), New Year's Day (Wednesday, January 1).

\$10 for Adults

\$8 for Seniors and Military

\$5 for youth 18 and under

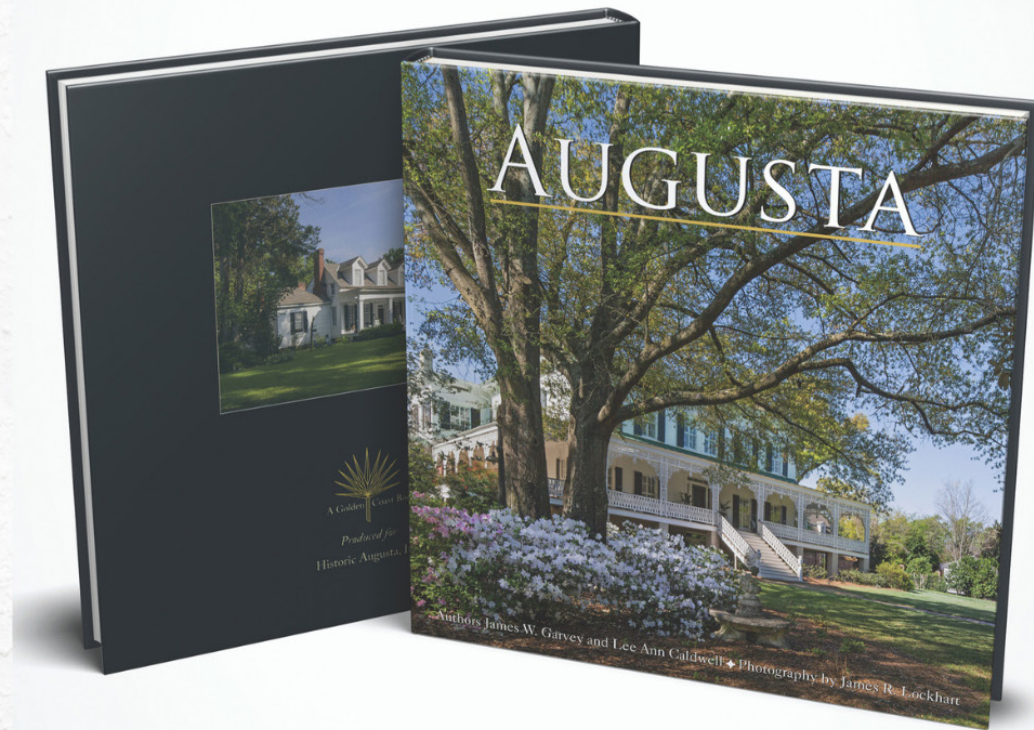
[www.wilsonboyhoodhome.org](http://www.wilsonboyhoodhome.org)

(706) 724-0436



The Wilson House will be decorated for Christmas throughout the month of December.

# the AUGUSTA book



a perfect gift for the holiday season

to purchase call 706.724.0436 or email  
[programs@historicaugusta.org](mailto:programs@historicaugusta.org)

**The Augusta Book may also be purchased at the following retailers:**

Andrew's Gallery, Antique Gallery, Augusta & Co., Bedford Greenhouses  
Cadence Bank (Wheeler Road, Medical Center, & Daniel Village Branches)  
Capsule, Charleston Street, Curtain Call Fabrics, Design Images  
Historic Augusta, Low Country Clothier, Mish Mash Interiors  
Morris Museum of Art, Persnickety Interiors,  
Queensborough Bank (Augusta & Evans Branches)  
Sacred Heart, Shoes at Surrey, Simon's Formal Wear  
Southern Lighting Gallery, Surrey Center Pharmacy, The Book Tavern  
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Front Cover: The Skinner-Gardner House has recently been saved by moving it from 3202 Washington Road to the northwest corner of Skinner and West Roads in West Augusta.