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Valerie Cain Owen  
Board President at Landmarks Foundation

# Our Legacy, Our Future

## End-of-Year Campaign

**O**n July 25th, community leaders, preservation advocates, history scholars, museum colleagues and friends gathered at Hilltop Public House to bid farewell to our fearless leader, Collier Neeley and his family. Collier accepted a position as the Executive Director of Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF) whose mission is to ensure that Savannah's historic heritage is preserved. HSF will be celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Collier already has his plate full with a major ongoing exterior renovation of the Davenport House Museum. While these projects are occupying a lot of his time, Neeley is definitely formulating his vision for the future of the HSF. The Landmarks Foundation Board of Directors is currently searching for the right person to fill the vacant Executive Director position.

Members of the local Capitol City Master Gardeners Association and other local gardening groups have spent the spring and summer revitalizing the assorted beds located at Old Alabama Town. These so-called Passalong Gardeners work in the flower beds every week maintaining an array of Alabama native blooming perennials, shrubs, annuals and herbs. Plans are underway for an expansion in the Ordeman-Mitchell-Shaw Complex backyard to include a period orchard and lost vegetable garden.

After a very busy spring with school group tours, our site has had time to recover by completing some

overdue maintenance such as replacing porch steps, trimming trees and shrubs, plumbing, reroofing porches, replenishing museum store merchandise and many other odd jobs after thousands of students came through our site.

The interpretive committee is continuously working to update the museum interpretive plan, highlighting the Black Experience throughout the stories told in our buildings. This committee is currently designing new information panels. As part of our update, beacons will be implemented throughout Old Alabama Town to enhance our visitors' experience funded by a Daniel Foundation grant.

Landmarks End-of-Year campaign: *Our Legacy, Our Future* is almost here! Landmarks needs your support for maintenance projects, restorations and educational programming. Your generous gifts have made a serious impact in previous years and your End-of-Year donations to the Landmarks Foundation can make all the difference in our efforts to preserve, interpret and present Alabama's architecture, history and culture. The End-of-Year Campaign is your last opportunity to max out your tax credit for 2025 and be part of our greater community preservation effort. If you choose to purchase a membership to support Landmarks, our educational programming and several special events are free of charge. Enjoy your Holiday Season!

# Street Trails

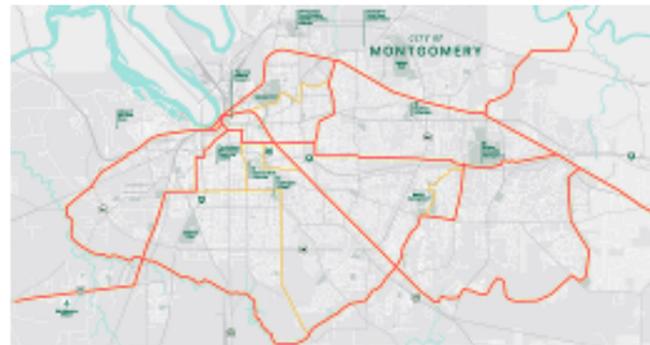


Ashley Thorne  
Executive Director River Region Trails

**W**hen I stepped into the Executive Director role last August, I intuitively understood that the “low-hanging fruit” for implementing a 150+ mile trail network would be street trails. Unlike other projects, they don’t require land acquisition or major hydrology studies and our city already budgets for repaving projects. The key, it seemed, was to get ahead of those maintenance cycles. After all, the worst outcome would be for the city to repave a street on our network without taking the opportunity to add bike lanes. I quickly realized that most street projects are completed in short segments. Even if we re-stripe a section of a four-lane road into three with a protected bike lane, it often results in a fragmented, inconsistent corridor—potentially even less safe than before.

Instead of chasing these piecemeal opportunities, I decided to focus on the power of street trails and protected bike lanes on urban streets enhanced with trees for shade and traffic calming. These trails inherently connect neighborhoods to amenities and points of interest. When thoughtfully designed, they frequently spark private investment along the corridor and when done effectively, can generate significant economic and social returns. So, we needed to think strategically by identifying priority streets, pursuing them fully and doing so collaboratively. This is the only way to build a safe, connected and meaningful network. It was then when we began to

When we think of trails, we often picture narrow, mulched paths winding through forests dappled with sunlight. The River Region Trails Master Plan (completed in 2023) includes' trails that celebrate our natural spaces. But, how do trails and urban renewal relate to each other?



prioritize which streets should be first. The Selma-to- Montgomery Trail was one of them. This corridor stood out for its potential to capitalize on Civil Rights tourism and for its ability to enhance the quality of life for the neighborhoods along its route. Thanks to funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) feasibility and design are already underway.

Another priority corridor that quickly rose to the top was the Zoo Trail. This route spans three wide streets—Columbus, Upper Wetumpka, and Fairground creating a direct connection between Riverfront Stadium at its southern end and the Montgomery Zoo at its northern end. Along the way, it links major destinations like the Equal Justice Initiative, Old Alabama Town, Garrett Coliseum and the State Fairgrounds. The Zoo Trail will directly benefit the neighborhoods of Capitol Heights, King Hill community and Chisholm by providing safe, accessible routes into downtown. At the same time, it will beautify Historic North Hull District as a key corridor for tourists visiting the Zoo, whether they arrive by car, bike or on foot.

We recognized that the Selma-to-Montgomery Trail and the Zoo Trail offer significant economic and social benefits to west and north Montgomery neighborhoods, respectively. To create a more comprehensive network, we decided that southern and eastern corridors would also need to be identified. This would establish a hub-and-spoke model of transportation, with the iconic Court Square Fountain at the hub allowing residents and tourists the ability to safely reach any part of the city by bike safely. With this broader framework in place, the system also lends itself to strategic infill of bike/ped improvements allowing smaller-scale projects to connect seamlessly over time.

The southern “spoke” was naturally identified as South Court Street which for much of its length is a three-lane, one-way street. There has already been interest in converting it to two-way traffic, particularly since Fire Station 10 was completed this year. This corridor connects Gateway Park at the south through Centennial Hill, the Garden District, South Hull and Edgemont neighborhoods, each offering unique opportunities for infill development along the corridor. Each of these corridors is also a major bus route creating additional opportunities to integrate alternative transportation infrastructure such as dedicated bus lanes, recessed bus stops, bus shelters and bus bike racks. By layering these improvements, we can build a transportation system that works seamlessly for cyclists, pedestrians and transit riders alike. We wanted to maintain momentum on

trail projects already funded through ARPA, including the Selma-to-Montgomery Trail, Riverfront Extension, Cypress Nature Preserve, and Jackson Cut. At the same time, we wanted to stake our claim on the hub-and-spoke corridors. There was also growing interest in additional trail segments, such as restreaming the 3-Mile Branch watershed or creating a Riverfront water-level trail tying into Riverfront Park. To bring all of these initiatives together, we formalized them in a partnership agreement with the city—the 30x30 Plan.

In August, Mayor Reed signed the 30x30 Partnership Agreement with River Region Trails, committing the city to work collaboratively to have 30 miles of trail completed or underway by 2030. The agreement has already sparked additional partnerships including one with Auburn’s Master of Community Planning program. A class of graduate students is currently studying the Zoo Trail and their findings will not only help build community support but also strengthen grant applications and other partnership opportunities.

While we are strong believers in the merit of major capital projects that can transform parts of our city, we remain committed to the years it takes to fund and build them. It is the connectivity of our city through beautiful, safe streets that has the potential to impact the most residents with the least public investment. We are very excited to see these projects come to life!





# Montgomery Oyster Festival 2025

We had 50 volunteers, 350 visitors, 12 Alabama chefs and Gulf oysters galore prepared to your liking. Montgomery's signature Oyster Festival 2025 was again a booming success.

Many thanks to Lightning Line for organizing the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Oyster Festival. Ella Martin and Griffin Holon made it all work on Landmarks end. The oyster shuckers and the foodies demonstrated their talents. The musicians and visitors celebrated upcoming Fall with the Landmarks Foundation.

Thank you for your inspiring energy, your presence and your love for oysters.

See you all next year!





Paige Perryman  
Crook Fellow at Landmarks Foundation

## Spice Up the Cotton Gin Experience

The current interpretation in the basement has never been updated since the Cotton Gin opened in November 1993. The new exhibit will also include the Black Experience.

“For the past two years, I have been the Crook Fellow at Old Alabama Town. My role at Landmarks is to reinterpret the cotton gin exhibit. This exhibit will connect people and places. Students are already familiar with the commodity of cotton and the necessary processes that affect the people who occupied the same land these children currently do. This approach will enable students to connect historical events to the present, making them better historians and well informed citizens. I am also working on an oral history of the cotton industry that attendees will be able to listen to while visiting the exhibit. At the end of the experience, Old Alabama Town visitors will leave with a better understanding of cotton globally, nationally and locally in addition to how cotton has affected culture.

Moreover, as a part of my master’s degree, I am writing a thesis focused on

the rural class accessibility in southern museum spaces. There are challenges that rural students face when it comes to visiting museums. My project will focus on the problems that these young people face as well as ways that museums can help combat these issues. I have collaborated with and will present my research at the Southeastern Museums Conference in October in Montgomery.

This research assistantship has been a great experience with a variety of museum functions. I have gained experience in curation, education, professional development, historic preservation and event planning. I have thoroughly enjoyed all of the work I have done for the Southeastern Museums Conference and I would love to thank Old Alabama Town for investing in me.”

## In Memory



Edith Johnston Crook, Landmarks’ long-time board member and president, volunteer, supporter, and friend, passed away on Tuesday, September 2. She was the youngest of four children to Watkins and Edith Johnston. She attended Sidney Lanier High School and then graduated from Hollins College in Virginia in 1969. After moving back to Montgomery, she married Charles McDowell Crook of Union Springs.

Edith was a passionate advocate for historic preservation and loved Old Alabama Town, serving on the board of directors and as president of the Landmarks Foundation for several years working closely with her devoted friend Mary Ann Neeley.

## 2026 Passalong Gardeners Program

Landmarks Passalong Gardeners Educational Program 2026 is blooming as ever before: Landmarks Birding Walks with Christopher (Birdman) Joe and the hands-on bookbinding makeshop with Cynthia Jancaterino. Added to next years program is Garden Gossip, Ask Jacob, an informal breakfast program with Jacob van Megen, Horticulturist at Old Alabama Town, to ask all your urgent garden question. Also new to the program is our morning workshop, Birds, Bees & Butterflies. This exciting hands-on workshop to install the anticipated Landmarks pollinators' fields, and easy homemade solution to make sure that wildlife has plenty of opportunity to drink, bath or puddle during the Alabama summer months.

For the children, there are workshops for flowerpot painting, making butterfly feeders and special garden tours to experience sensory friendly flower beds. During this tour, children learn to recognize plants through touching, smelling and observing. Our full Passalong Gardeners Program 2026 will be published on our website by mid-December.



## Landmarks Birding Walks

Landmarks Birding is a leisurely outdoor activity to observe and identify wild birds in their natural habitat. With Christopher (Birdman) Joe as your guide, can you think of a better way to start your first Saturday of the month?

Most birding visitors don't even think of themselves as birders. Often a passive observation turns into an active pursuit: learning their names, downloading the Merlin app and starting to recognize different songs. For many, a simple walk over the museum grounds rapidly became a treasure hunt. Finding yourself slowing down, no longer just walking, but looking and listening, discovering that the city you thought you knew is full of vibrant, winged friends: boisterous blue jays, cheerful chattering finches, and cooing mourning doves.

The last Birdwalk of the season is Saturday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, from 8:30-11am. The ticket price (\$25) includes a light breakfast in Lucas Tavern. The walks are free of charge for Landmarks Members and volunteers. Tickets must be purchased in advance.



# Orange is a Statement in our Flower Beds



Jacob van Megen  
Horticulturist at Old Alabama Town

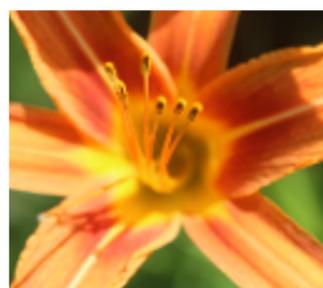
Amber, tangerine and even pumpkin orange details are a must have in your flower beds. Orange can be a divisive color in gardens. Many gardeners are convinced that orange is the brightest, most vibrant color to include.

**W**hen we were planning our new flower beds, I was rapidly briefed on the phrase 'Any color except orange'. It's a color that some gardeners instantly dismiss, but while it might be bright and in your face, used wisely, it can elevate a planting scheme with its warm glow and bring out the best in other colors. For instance, lime green and purple are seriously good complementary companions—purple asters with orange daylilies (*Hemerocallis*) or orange *Geum* with purple *Salvia* and ladies' mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*) a little later in the season. In autumn, the glowing amber hues of plants such as dahlia, helenium, and kniphofia team effortlessly with the biscuity golden shades of ornamental grasses with the warm colors of turning foliage, contrast with the mauves of asters.

The red-hot-pokers (*Kniphofia 'Nobilis'*) produce plump pokers of fiery orange from August to October. It's a tall plant, easily four feet tall, making them a real statement in almost any flower bed.

Team them with equally bold companions, such as zebra grass (*Miscanthus sinensis 'Strictus'*) or joe-pye weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*). This plant is a North American native perennial known for its large, fragrant clusters of pale pink to purple flowers and was used by Native Americans to treat fevers. It needs full sun and fertile soil. It's worth giving it a try in a roomy gravel garden. It will also look impressive emerging from swatches of perennials in a prairie garden.

And, who isn't familiar with montbretia (*Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora*)? While many gardeners prefer to plant the well-known scarlet-flowered cultivar *Crococsmia x Cortunnus 'Lucifer'*, those with brilliant orange flowers will add an equally fiery effect to your flowerbeds along with their clumps of arching strappy foliage. They'll reach between two feet tall and bloom from July to September in sun or dappled shade. So, embrace your sense of adventure and give orange a chance.



## Ask Jacob

Garden Gossip is a new Landmarks Passalong Gardeners initiative starting in 2026. Bring along your most urgent garden questions, enjoy a light breakfast and meet other plant lovers. Meetings are from 8-10am and are free for Landmarks Members.

## Dates 2026

- Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>
- Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>
- Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup>
- Saturday, July 18<sup>th</sup>
- Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>



# Holiday at the Tavern

Sat.  
Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>  
from 10am-  
3pm



Meet old friends, make new friends along the way, and celebrate the Winter Solstice Season at Lucas Tavern on Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Our program is family friendly and exciting. Southern inspired fingerfood is available throughout the day. A wood burning fire, decorations and heart warming drinks launches you right into the joy of the season.



## Book Reading

Douglas D. Mitchell is an actor known for films like Shadow Tag (2025) and The Second Circle (2026). Douglas graduated from LAMDA and is based in Montgomery for his work in film, television, and stage productions. During Holiday at the Tavern at Old Alabama Town, Douglas will be reading from the book Christmas Tales of Alabama by Kelly Kazek.

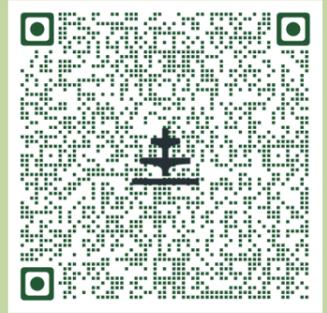
## Storytelling

With his book Shackled Again (2023), and the Women's Fight (2024), Tony Watkins, a Montgomery-based historian, documentarian, and author, explores the deep and lasting stain left by the institution of slavery by chronicling events and personalities from the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement. During Holiday at the Tavern, Tony will perform as a storyteller/griot and share personal experiences that inspired him to write his books.

## Rainbow Chorus

River Regions Rainbow Chorus will take care of the musical accompaniment. The famous Montgomery-based LGBTQ+ choir will wander through Old Alabama Town from 12-1pm and share their love for music with you. Come and join this sweet holiday performance that you sure don't want to miss.

# Our Legacy, Our Future! Your Donation Matters A Lot to our Mission



To preserve, interpret, and present Alabama's architecture, history, and culture.



Landmarks Foundation

At Landmarks Foundation, every artifact, photograph and exhibit tells a unique story about our shared past. Your support is essential in ensuring these stories are preserved, interpreted and presented for future generations.

Your donation helps us properly care for and restore historical artifacts, protecting them from damage and decay so they can be enjoyed for years to come. Your support allows us to design engaging exhibits that bring history to life, making learning fun and meaningful for visitors of all ages. With your help, we can offer workshops, tours, and special events that connect young people and families to our local heritage. Your contributions enable us to research, document and share

stories that might otherwise be forgotten ensuring a more complete and inclusive history. And last but not least, your generosity helps us host community events and collaborations that foster pride and a sense of belonging.

When you support our museum, whether you donate, become a valued member, or pay a visit to Old Alabama Town, you're not just giving to a building—you're investing in the legacy of our community at large. Together, we can ensure that past lessons learned, triumphs and memories continue to inspire and educate future generations. Your donation is the heart of our mission.

Thank you for keeping our history alive!



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Holiday at  
the Tavern



Orange



Oyster Festival



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The Newsletter of the Landmarks Foundation



# Momentum