

# Preserving the Past for Our Future:

## Exciting Progress at the Butts County Historical Society

**S**o, what's been happening? A tremendous amount of work has been underway to preserve the past for our future. There is so much history right here in our little county, and the Butts County Historical Society has been hard at work ensuring it is protected, shared, and celebrated.

### **Improvements and Expansions at the Indian Spring Hotel Museum**

The Indian Spring Hotel Museum continues to improve and expand its displays and offerings. Among the recent accomplishments, the Society successfully preserved the 1940 "Sharecropper" painting from the Post Office. The "Butts County Veterans' Portrait Memorial" (1901), saved by David Ridgeway, Sr., has also been prominently displayed.

To further support historical research, the Society purchased a set of veteran research books, complete with a worktable and assistance for visitors. Authentic and replica Civil War artifacts, including guns, a sword, and both Union and Confederate uniforms, have also been added to the collection.

Preservation efforts extended to the building itself, with the installation of UV ray-protected curtains and weather stripping to protect the windows. The garden has been refurbished with a sprinkler system and new heritage plants and flowers. The Society also accepted original pieces from Frances Roberts of the Varner family, who lived in the home for 103 years.



Ongoing landscape and maintenance work has been diligently performed each week, with special thanks to the Butts County Sheriff's Office for their support.

### **Welcoming Thousands of Visitors and Engaging the Community**

The Butts County Museum welcomed approximately 6,000 visitors over the past year. Major events included the 35th Annual Native People's Festival, which featured more authentic performances than ever before, and the 16th Annual Artifacts Day, where a woolly mammoth bone was identified alongside artifacts dating back 10,000 years.

The 10th Annual Tour of Homes expanded to include three dating back to 1825. Educational outreach remained strong, with 600 eighth-grade students visiting thanks to the commitment of the School Superintendent, Board, and Principals.

The Youth Junior Historical Society has grown to include 30 young members serving as docents, performing in plays, participating in parades, and bringing history to life through "Voices of the Past." Two Junior Ranger Camps served thirty children, along with a private camp and visiting students from Muskogee National College in Oklahoma.

The Society also hosted a familiarization dinner at the Hotel for staff from Indian Springs State Park, High Falls State Park, and Dauset Trails Nature Center, as well

as a dinner and tour for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

## Expanding Educational Programs and Speaker Events

The Society expanded its Speaker's Circuit, offering programs on topics such as the infamous Dixie Mafia, a Medicine Man show, and presentations by four historic authors. A historic cookbook demonstration allowed guests to experience dishes prepared from historic recipes.

By joining Georgia Humanities' Speaker's Circuit, the Society has ensured even more engaging programs in the future. Upcoming presentations include "Officer Down," presented by Jackson Chief of Police Matt Garrison, honoring five fallen officers in the county, and a presentation by Jim Herbert on four devastating fires that changed the future of Butts County.

## Even More Exciting Milestones and Developments

The historic 1890 Chapel hosted three worship services led by Ed Hoard, Charles Hoard, and Carlos Duffey, with Daniel Edwards and David White providing inspiring gospel music.

After 21 years of effort, the speed limit in front of the Hotel and Chapel was successfully reduced to 30 MPH, improving safety for the growing number of visitors.

The Society met with state tourism and cultural resource departments to expand marketing exposure and finalizing efforts to designate Butts County as a Georgia Trust "Rambler" community. Work has also begun to designate Indian Springs as a Historic Overlay District and add more properties to the National Historic Registry.

A two-acre park behind the Hotel was created from land donated by a Camp Daughtry descendant. A path to Big Sandy Creek was cleared,



creating a peaceful seating area called "Peace Point." An 1820s log cabin relocated from Monroe County has been staged to show visitors frontier life.

Fundraising efforts are underway to add a greenroom to the Flovilla Schoolhouse Theater, providing a permanent home for the local acting guild. The gift shop has expanded with additional books and items, and a Land Acknowledgement approved by the Muscogee Nation has been created for the Museum.

Research conducted by the Society contributed to the publication of six Butts County in the "Historic Rural of Georgia" coffee-table book. The Board has also expanded to include a history teacher and the UGA Extension Agent/4-H Leader.

The youth group will soon embark on its first field trip to Savannah, Darien, Sapelo Island, and Jekyll Island. The Society is producing a book of Dr. Ed Hoard's "Moments in Time" broadcasts, as well as a pictorial coffee-table book titled Indian Springs Throughout the Years.

## Looking Ahead to an Incredible Year

So, what have we been doing? A lot. And there is even more ahead.

The Butts County Historical Society meets on the fourth Thursday of every month at the Flovilla Schoolhouse at 6:00 PM, where members gather for dinner and fellowship.

With a committed, experienced, and creative Board, and an extraordinarily talented group of youth, the Butts County Historical Society is making 2026 another incredible year.

## Come see what we're about.

Follow the Society at [ButtsCountyHistoricalSocietyInc.org](http://ButtsCountyHistoricalSocietyInc.org) or on Facebook for upcoming events. For questions, call 770-775-5350.