

**Sugar Hill Historic Preservation Society Meeting**  
**Wednesday, November 18, 2020 7:00 P.M.**  
**City of Sugar Hill City Hall**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Approval of the Agenda**

Kathryn Baskin convened the meeting at 7:04 PM. She called for a motion to approve the agenda. Stephanie Isaacs made a motion to approve the agenda. Tiffany Hale Carter seconded the motion. The agenda was approved unanimously.

The following members, volunteers, and guests were in attendance:

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>
Kathryn Baskin*	Board Member/Chairman
Joann Burel	Board Member/Treasurer
Tiffany Hale Carter*	Board Member
Bill Harting	Board Member
Stephanie Isaacs*	Board Member/Vice Chairman
Kim Landers	City Liaison/Secretary
Margaret Neal*	Board Member
Jedidiah King (Virtual)	Speaker, Jedidiah King, Gold Mines in Sugar Hill/Simmons & Shelley families

The following members were absent:

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>
Chris Walker	Board Member
Ryckie Fernandez	Board Member
Brandon Hembree	Board Member/City Council, Post 1
Ryan Butts	Board Member
Varessa Butts	Volunteer
Darrell Pruitt	Board Member
Sherry Smith	Volunteer

\*Indicates committee chair

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Kathryn Baskin called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from September. Bill Harting made a motion to approve the minutes. Margaret Neal seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

Kathryn Baskin introduced the evening's speaker, Jedidiah King, a recent graduate from Bob Jones University in South Carolina. He's a former resident of the Parkview neighborhood in Sugar Hill and has researched the gold mining history and families in Sugar Hill. The remaining archeological evidence and available sources were included in his final thesis paper on Sugar Hill history. Jedidiah is also a history teacher at an online school.

Jedidiah King was not present at the meeting but joined the meeting via Teams Meeting to give his presentation.

His topics included;

- Gold Mining was an important part of Sugar Hill history prior to the city being incorporated in 1939.

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- In 1820 and 1830 there was a Gold Mine explosion in Dahlonega, auriferous quartz was found around 1810 -1820. *Auriferous means "of rocks or minerals containing gold."*
- Discussed the Simmons Family and Gold Mining in Sugar Hill - Adam Quimby Simmons, purchased 2,000 acres off Level Creek Road now in Sugar Hill to develop into a plantation using money obtained from his second wife in 1825. A couple of years after his purchase, gold was found on the property. The family eventually moved to this property in 1831. The Simmons engaged in mining for several years. Jedidiah provided a picture of the Simmons Family in his presentation. In 1830, James Simmons joined in the Georgia gold mining rush. James learned how to mine using techniques of prospectors at Dahlonega in 1820 during his breaks in his education. He had the help of five slaves, based on census records, at least three may have possibly been children (2 males, 1 female). The other two slaves were working either in Lawrenceville and/or in the Sugar Hill area but he had not specifically determined if they were working on the property. James Simmons dug out swaths cut into the dirt an average depth of 20 feet. The ore was auriferous quartz which contained gold. Simmons crushed the quartz in an arrastra, verified from a geological survey which is basically a Spanish mill *this is a big millstone that was used in 1830-1870* and driven by a donkey. During the Civil War little mining was conducted on the property, and after the war, Simmons served as the clerk of Gwinnett County Court.
- James P. Simmons son of Adam Simmons grew up on this property and was trusted to own a portion of this property in 1850.
- James's father stopped mining in 1832 and used most of his property as a cotton plantation. Later he discovered an herbal combination that made him a wealthy patent medicine seller.
- By 1852 Adam Simmons basically sold the rest of the property to either his other son or to other residents. Records are unclear since the land deed records were destroyed when the Gwinnett County Court House burned down in 1871 by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).
- In 1870, Edward Shelley bought Lot 289 from James Simmons; his son William "Squire" Shelley had moved from England to work the mines with his father but neither had mining experience, so James Simmons assisted them.
- William Simmons, brother of James P. Simmons, also helped to work the mines during this time frame.
- James Simmons *paid more attention with his life* after the Civil War. Mining was not very profitable, which was misleading to some during this time. Miners indicated it cost more to mine than what they were making off the gold. Jedidiah provided a map indicating Land Lots 289 & 290 of original lot records (located in Sugar Hill) and the pathway of Level Creek (top right corner) which over the years has been diverted.
- James P. Simmons was a critical and foundational member of the Sugar Hill Community, a Christian man and a founder of the Baptist church in the area. When he was in the Civil War he served in the 1850s Council for multiple years and was one of the only members to vote "NO" to Secession for Georgia in 1961 Here is a link for more information; <http://civilwarbaptists.com/thisdayinhistory/1861-january-22/>
- Five other members disagreed wholly with the matter of Secession but promised to not rebel against the state. James son heavily disagreed with him.
- There is a manuscript called Joseph Byrd who is an ancestor of the son of William Simmons that says his son wanted to join the confederacy and believed in this righteous cause, even though his own father who owned slaves disagreed with it.

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- William Simmons had a home located in Lawrenceville, one of two of the last remaining Victorian style homes. The Elisha Winn House is tied to the Simmons family due to the marriage by Sara Elizabeth Simmons and Samuel James Winn which is the brother of Samuel Elisha Winn.
- There is also a Historical House located on Level Creek Road which is the Shelley/Howerton home one of the oldest homes in Sugar Hill. There is a book written that explains William Shelley's interest with James Simmons. It is recorded that the 2,000 acres the Simmons Family owned was sold off to Edward Shelley, originally a coal miner from England. He came to America because he was friends with James Simmons.
- Edward Shelley and James Simmons would heavily mine 500-600 acres of the property which encompassed areas in Land Lots 289, 290, and 302. This is not complete as there are records missing and those blanks cannot be filled in.
- In 1880 there was a disastrous collapse in the mine and workers were almost killed due to the collapse. The reason there are no longer any gold mine entrances today is because they have since collapsed. There is also a subdivision called Parkview Subdivision by E.E. Robinson Park where Jedidiah used to live. His neighbor had an entire line collapse which is likely the remains of one of the shafts that still exist under the neighborhood. The Robinson family built the neighborhood over the shafts. Jedidiah stated he had pulled up large incredibly old pieces of timber in the soils on his prior property in this development. It is his belief there are remaining compartments and shafts existing and waiting to collapse after 150 years of neglect.
- A resident of this development, Jane Pare, wrote in the paper a while back about having an entrance to a mine in her back yard which coincides with where the line collapsed. Jedidiah was showing a map when mentioning this.
- In 1892 & 1896 James P. Simmons and his wife died. The property was passed off to their sons and daughters who were not interested in the property. It was turned over to Robbie Robinson of Atlanta; records cannot be obtained for this individual, nor can any history be found on this individual or any ancestors to this individual.
- Around the 1930's the property exchanged to different members of the Robinson family. Eventually it was turned over to Eddie Robinson who developed a neighborhood on this property.
- The Shelley Family worked with a family known as the Amphletts (Harry and William), two British prospectors who had been working in Georgia for a while mining mica. They had consulted with a lot of geological surveyors to make sure they were going to get the most money for their deals. Unfamiliar with American laws they were scammed by a lawyer who was also mining on the property and walked away with \$1,000.00, which in today's times would be more like \$80,000.00. They hired a new lawyer, Victor Lamar Smith, who was a great friend of the Amphletts. The Amphletts were told they could hire people from the Sugar Hill community to work the mines for approximately \$.30/hour. Sugar Hill was a big enough community in 1931 for them to hire people to work the mine. By 1940-1950, the Shelley property would be mined to a point where the Amphlett brothers pulled out because it was no longer profitable. Eventually the property is purchased by Eugene Robinson which included the Shelly property and Simmons Mine properties and was transformed into a neighborhood.
- A Robinson family member told Jedidiah that miners would actually build large ditches to get down to the gold and not actually build shafts, but would cut large valleys to get access

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to the gold. One member of the Robinson family indicated when he was very young being warned and told not to get close to the edges because he might fall into them.

- There is actually a hole that has been found and noted as a gold mine. Currently Sugar Hill has proposed to turn this property into Gold Mine Park.
- The story of “Sugar Hill” and how it got its name. Jedidiah indicated it is believed that Sugar Hill was named such due to a wagon on its way to Cumming, Georgia, dropping a load of Sugar on its way up a hill when the axel broke. All the sugar spilled and this is how Sugar Hill got its name. Jedidiah said that since the quartz had to be crushed and chemically cleaned, it is more likely there were quartz drifts thrown on certain portions of the hill as garbage to discard. He provided a picture of the substance which is actually powdered quartz. Properties of powdered quartz indicate that it will last a lot longer than sugar and is likely not go away in the rain. Sugar on the other hand will dissolve rather quickly in water/rain and not likely to become a landmark to the people of Sugar Hill. Sugar is also more likely to be eaten by animals and quartz has a bitter taste, especially this type which would have been infused with sulfur and animals most likely would not consume.
- The Simmons and Shelley mines are not the only two mines in the area. There are actually two more mines. They are known as the Harris mine which is southwest to the E.E. Robinson Park extension which belonged to a Jesse Chambers who James Simmons knew. There is also the Piedmont Mine which is northwest of the Simmons Mine directly across from the City Hall on Highway 20 in the wooded area where a Captain GW Thompson had been mining gold. Jedidiah indicated this mine was only about 100 feet deep. Captain GW Thompson passed his reigns off in the 1910’s to the Buford Mining Company which still exists today on a smaller scale in other parts of the state. Kim Landers asked for more information on the Buford Gold Mining Company. Jedidiah indicated that he was referring to Captain GW Thompson and his Piedmont Mine. He noted that there were actually three companies he saw in the area: the Suwanee Gold Mining Company, Level Creek Gold Mining Company, and the Buford Gold Mining Company. The Level Creek and Suwanee Gold Mining companies took over the Shelley and Simmons mines before the Amphlett brothers. Jedidiah only saw one reference on the geological survey to the Buford Gold Mining Company which supposedly took over the Piedmont mine after Captain GW Thompson left it or at least he sold it to them.
- Jedidiah said there was a lot more that he did not mention. He stated that there is a house on Level Creek Road that has a gold mine entrance which has been capped over at the front of a fountain. He added that there is construction taking place on a hill which used to be mined as the Harris mine and was sold apparently and is now a park.

Kathryn Baskin thanked Jedidiah for sharing his information with the society and thanked him for his time. She indicated that she hoped to see him again soon at the society meetings.

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**Treasurer's Report**

Joann Burel stated that \$417.86 has been spent for the D2 solution used for cleaning cemetery markers. The \$163.47 clean up supplies for clean-up day will be paid in the next round of payables. Joann Burel indicated there is a balance of \$9,582.14 in the account to date.

**Committee Chair Reports**

**Budget Committee**

Kathryn Baskin provided a listing of things that have already been approved for the budget which shows the budgeted amount and includes items that have already been received as well as other items that are not in the system at all. Kathryn explained that there are a number of items needed for the museum. She suggested a blanket motion for \$5000.00 to purchase the books for the reference library and also the items that will be used in the museum for displaying the artifacts in addition to a few other things. Brandon Hembree had recommended that SHHPS order the remainder of the books on the list that the DAR suggested for the reference library which is about \$1,000.00 of books to be ordered and the \$1,200.00 that had already been approved. The motion will include the \$1,000.00 for the remainder of the books on the list she provided. The museum supplies \$2,389.75 is what Tiffany Hale suggested for displays in the museum. City of Sugar Hill Ned Jasarevic has provided the prices for the computer in the reference room, and an all-in-one scanner and printer, and the necessary software for \$1,447.99. Stephanie Isaacs is getting a price for the Margaret Powell (killed in the 1924 tornado) marker, and once she knows what is remaining in the budget, she will know the amount she needs to stay within for this marker. All these items bring the total budget to \$8,934.07 leaving the remaining amount of \$1,065.93.

Kathryn Baskin called for a motion to approve \$5,000.00 (rounded up to include anything unforeseen {taxes/shipping}) to purchase the additional items as discussed above. Kathryn Baskin asked Bill Harting about the flag holders that he purchased. Bill Harting indicated that he was donating those to the cause. Kathryn Baskin indicated that she needed to check with Chris Walker on the cleaning of the saddle as it may also be an expense. Margaret Neal made a motion to approve the additional \$5,000.00 budgeted items as discussed by Kathryn Baskin. Joann Burel seconded the motion. The motion approved unanimously.

**Museum Committee**

Tiffany Hale Carter stated that Kim Landers pulled everything out of the current archives to see what the society currently has for display. Kim Landers, Kathryn Baskin, Stephanie Isaacs, and Tiffany Hale Carter laid out the dimensions of the museum in the current history room to get an visual perception of the space and came up with a flow for the new museum. The Museum Committee also came up with a budget for the museum and Tiffany Hale Carter went over the list of items they proposed, the total budget items total \$2,389.75. Mrs. Carter told the group that the museum is coming together quickly so SHHPS is on a time crunch to get these items ordered and received this year for the current budget. This list is provided and attached to these minutes. Bill Harting asked about getting a 42" monitor for Veterans recognition only. Tiffany indicated she's not sure if that's a possibility due to the limited space in the museum, but that she will double check with Troy Besseche. There is a monitor that will be located inside the research room, and the back area behind the wall where the saddle is to be located will be utilized for the DAR special exhibits. Originally it was discussed to have media in this area, but the design team came back and said there

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would not be media in that area. This is the reason why the media was moved to the research room. Bill Harting indicated this would be out in the open and used only to display the Veteran's names. Tiffany Hale Carter indicated she did not remember a need for an additional monitor and said that she would talk with Troy Besseche. Kathryn Baskin asked if there is a military section. Tiffany Hale Carter indicated there is not a dedicated military section. Tiffany Hale Carter indicated she had spoken with Brandon Hembree about the Veterans program and she indicated to him they needed to have some special exhibits to recognize the Veterans in the museum. Kathryn Baskin told the group that she had spoken with the DAR and they told her due to COVID they would loan SHHPS demo kits which has replicas of artifacts to teach various things. Kathryn Baskin stated that Brandon Hembree had suggested getting a military uniform and putting it on a mannequin to showcase Charlotte Howerton's service during WWII. She added that there is a possibility that during Veteran's Day and Memorial Day, SHHPS may be able to run the names of the veterans on a monitor as a screen saver. Tiffany Hale Carter indicated that if SHHPS were to receive a lot of donations of memorabilia pertaining to the military then a space would be dedicated specifically for the display of military items. Stephanie Isaacs had her floor plan that the Museum Committee came up with and that was passed around to the SHHPS members to look at. The topics the committee has come up with thus far include, Communities, Schools, Diversity, Native American, Present Day, City of Sugar Hill, Then and Now, Lake Lanier, Business and Industry, Fire Department and Churches. Kathryn Baskin indicated that the construction of the museum is anticipated to be completed by the end of this month. Tiffany Hale Carter thanked Kim Landers, Kathryn Baskin, and Stephanie Isaacs for working with her to determine the layout of the artifacts for the museum. She stated that it took two days to go through all the artifacts and to determine the topics for the museum. Tiffany Hale Carter left the meeting after giving her report.

**Research Committee -**

Stephanie Isaacs stated they are still waiting to determine the actual artifacts to be placed in the museum and then if additional research is needed the committee will act from there.

**Scholarship Committee -**

Ryckie Fernandez indicated that because he's a pastor and very involved in his church, as well as an IT engineer, and having two small children, he is going to have to step down as the Scholarship Committee chairman. He expressed his regrets but has realized that he can't give this the attention it needs and deserves. Kathryn Baskin indicated that she mentioned to Brandon Hembree they really do not have enough time to award the scholarship this year and it would not be fair to SHHPS nor to the students applying to try and rush the process. She added that a subject has not been determined, and even if there was a subject there would only be about three weeks for students to turn in an essay. Further, she advised that the essays would have to be evaluated. Ms. Baskin noted that there wasn't enough time to choose the recipient and to award the scholarship before the end of the year. Kathryn Baskin indicated her recommendation is to wait until the fall of next year as the previous committee chairman Hollie Stouffer had recommended or wait until after the first of the year to readdress the scholarship. The \$1,000.00 that was set aside for this year will go back into the budget. Stephanie Isaacs indicated due to the unique time period and with the way that the schools are with part in-person and part virtual, the timing to publicize the scholarship opportunity would be compromised. Kathryn Baskin indicated they can revisit in January and set a timeline then. Kim Landers stated that she feels like they should address the scholarship in January

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and at least come up with a subject for the essay, set a timeline to advertise, including deadlines, and schedule a time to evaluate the essays. She added that the award dates should be scheduled so that there is a regular schedule and the teachers will know about this scholarship ahead of time. Ryckie Fernandez indicated that he thought it would be advantageous to revisit it in January and that Varessa Butts had scholarship ideas. He said that revisiting the scholarship timeline would allow Mrs. Butts time to bring these ideas to the table.

**Digital Archives Committee –**

Margaret Neal indicated that she, Kathryn Baskin, and Kim Landers met again today, and that they meet approximately every two weeks to go over the metadata and its entry into the Omeka system. She reported that they still are working on the procedure, but that it is close to being finished. Mrs. Neal stated that they would soon have a working procedures document with the goal to have someone enter the data into the system. Kathryn Baskin stated that each time they meet they make progress. Margaret Neal told the group that being detailed is important because we want to be consistent, and Kathryn Baskin stated we also want to meet DLG standards so they will accept our metadata. This will allow our viewers to have public access to our data through the Digital Library of Georgia in addition to our Omeka System. Kathryn stated the committee is still considering who will enter the data, unsure about the logistics of an intern, but the committee may be able to utilize the Youth Ambassadors for data entry once trained.

**Cemetery Committee –**

Stephanie Isaacs stated that the clean-up day was held and there was a pretty good turn-out with approximately 40 volunteers. Some did pea gravel work; others did headstone clean-up. The water supply from the Veteran's Memorial helped considerably. There were also a lot of trees down from the recent hurricane, and the city was able to provide a dumpster so they were able to get everything loaded into the dumpster and now the area looks amazing. Stephanie stated there is one tree in the back of the cemetery that will need to be cut up. Kathryn Baskin indicated that she had walked back there recently, and it appears the tree was being removed.

**Old Business**

Kathryn Baskin asked if there was any old business. Being there was none, she then reported on New Business.

**New Business**

Kathryn Baskin stated the December meeting will be December 16, 2020, and that there would not be a speaker for the December meeting.

No other discussion or questions were noted. There being no further business, Kathryn Baskin adjourned the meeting at 8:11PM.