

# AAHGS Metro Atlanta – General Meeting

DATE December 20, 2025

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TIME 1:00 PM EST

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MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY Clevlyn Anderson

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NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 31

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## Welcome and Introduction

The meeting was opened at 1:00 PM. Attendees were welcomed, and audio checks confirmed that participants online could hear clearly.

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## Meeting Etiquette and Disclaimer

- Members were reminded to mute upon entry.
  - Use the “raise hand” feature or chat for questions.
  - Rejoin the meeting if you experience technical difficulties.
  - Meeting recording notice was given, with the option for participants to leave if they did not consent.
  - The intellectual property disclaimer was read, noting that presentations and materials are protected and may not be recorded, photographed, or reproduced without permission.
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## Presentations: Members’ Show & Tell

1. Andrea R. Martin – Caroline’s Claim: African American Women’s Property Rights in Bluffton, South Carolina

Andrea presented a detailed genealogical and historical study of her ancestor Caroline Hetty Martin, a free woman of color born in 1820.

Highlights:

- Caroline appeared as a free woman of color in the 1850 Census and worked as a mantua maker (dressmaker).
- She purchased property in 1858, documented in Beaufort County deed books.
- Under South Carolina law, married women could not control property until April 16, 1868; thus, by 1860, her property fell under her husband Isaac H. Martin's control.
- The Martin family has maintained ownership of the land for 167 years (1858–2025).
- Andrea shared maps, census records, deeds, and a Civil War-era article on the Burning of Bluffton (1863), which destroyed much of the town, including the Martin property.
- She highlighted the family's multigenerational stewardship and the legacy of her grandfather, John Henry Martin, who lived to nearly 105.
- Q&A:
  - The family still owns the land.
  - The Burning of Bluffton referred to the town, not just the records.

## 2. Paula Watley Matabane – Gems in the Family Closet: Grandma's Memoir

Paula shared discoveries from researching her grandmother's 1948 memoir.

Highlights:

- Her grandmother, Mrs. Ione Willie Lee Jackson Davis, born 1881, wrote a memoir despite having only a 6th-grade education.
- Paula uncovered a photograph of Katie Lou Greer, later convicted of murder in 1924.
- She found a 1929 newspaper article showing her mother, Frances Ione Davis, winning a limerick contest at age 11.
- Her grandmother's dream of attending Spelman Seminary was denied by her father, but she later received a special teaching license in 1906.
- Paula's grandfather, Jefferson D. Davis, born enslaved, became a teacher and principal.
- All six of their children graduated from college; three sons earned degrees from Harvard, an unprecedented achievement at the time.
- Paula also uncovered dramatic events involving Gloucester Sharp, a relative involved in an 1883 attempted jail rescue and later sentenced to hard labor.

## 3. Johnette Brooks – *Heroic Gems of the Red Clay: Alpha Phi Alpha in World War I*

Johnette presented an in-depth historical profile of **Georgia's African American World War I servicemen** who were members of **Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.** Her research highlighted

the military service, professional achievements, and community impact of more than a dozen notable Alpha men with Georgia ties.

### Highlights:

- Introduced the **Atlanta WWI African American Research Center** and its project honoring “Heroic Gems of the Red Clay.”
- Profiled Alpha Phi Alpha members who served in WWI, including lieutenants, colonels, chaplains, physicians, attorneys, educators, and civic leaders.
- Featured individuals such as:
  - **Private Miles Greene Amos** – Atlanta native; WWI serviceman; first Black pharmacy owner in Georgia.
  - **Lt. James Krugman Arnold** – 366th Infantry; YMCA national director; Clark College graduate.
  - **2nd Lt. John Brother Cade** – Founder of Southern University Archives; Atlanta University and University of Chicago graduate.
  - **Col. Julian Levi Dawson, M.D.** – Highest-ranking Black medical officer of his era; Fisk and Northwestern graduate.
  - **Rep. William Levi Dawson** – First post-Reconstruction Black U.S. Congressman from Illinois; Fisk graduate; extensive archival collections.
  - **Private Herbert Alonzo Greenwood** – First Black Police Commissioner in Los Angeles; U.S. Attorney General for California; AU graduate.
  - **Private Fletcher Henderson** – “King of Swing”; AU graduate; major figure in American music history.
  - **Col. Austin T. Walden** – Prominent Atlanta attorney and judge; WWI officer; University of Michigan Law graduate.
  - **Lt. Ambrose Benjamin Nutt** and **Aiken Augustus Polk** – Early Harvard-trained Black attorneys with Georgia roots.
  - **Norris Bumstead Herndon** – Son of Alonzo Herndon; Harvard Business School graduate; grew Atlanta Life Insurance Company into a major enterprise.
- Demonstrated how fraternity records, military files, university archives, and local history collections reveal interconnected networks of Black excellence in the early 20th century.
- Noted that many of these men were also leaders in education, medicine, law, business, and civil rights.
- Closed with research recommendations for 2025, including exploring Sigma Pi Phi (the Boulé), the Blue Vein Society, and using YouTube as a research tool.

## Wendy Broughton – Genealogy Jackpot

Found a book that features members of her family. The book: *The Knight Family Legacy: One Family’s Story* by Marilyn R. Hill-Sutton 2010

- Thorough genealogical account
- Uses actual documents on historical facts

- Covers her FAN network

**Nefertiti Hawthorne** provided family stories of Brown babies in Germany and her family connection.

## **Business Meeting**

### Membership Update

- Current membership: 119 financial members
- Members encouraged to renew for 2026

### New Members and Guests

Attendees introduced themselves and shared research interests.

### Special Interest Groups

- Members encourage to join the Next SDUSMP Application workshop February – June.

### Chapter Projects

- Continued collaboration with the Fayette County Community Remembrance Coalition and the Equal Justice Initiative
- Ongoing development of African American lineage case studies for educational outreach

### Treasurer's Report

Posted in the members-only section of the website.

### Meeting Minutes

Posted in the members-only section.

(No September posting due to anniversary events.)

## **Officer Elections (2026–2028 Term)**

### Outgoing Officers

- Tamu Taylor, President

- Nefertiti Hawthorne, Vice President

Incoming Officers (January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2028)

- President: Clevlyn Anderson
- Vice President: Tamika Strong
- Treasurer: Dawnya Lindsey
- Recording Secretary: Tammy Ozier
- Corresponding Secretary: Vacant

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## Announcements

- **Next Meeting:** January 24, 2026 – Associate Professor of History Dr. Lisa Bratton: Historic Bratton Plantation , an Enslaved Ancestral Burial Ground.

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## Adjournment

The meeting concluded after presentations, business discussions, and announcements.