



Celebrating the Life of Emma Davis Hamilton

December 26, 1947 - January 26, 2026

It is with deep sadness that we, the members of the AAHGS Metro Atlanta Chapter, share the loss of a dear friend, leader, and mentor, **Emma Davis Hamilton**—affectionately known as "Empress Emma". She was a charter member of the AAHGS Metro Atlanta Chapter, formed in February 2000, and served as President from 2012–2015, after having been Vice President for a number of years. In 2012, under her leadership, the Atlanta Chapter received the AAHGS *National Chapter of the Year* award. What stands out most from her time with the Chapter was her active, positive leadership and her deep passion for and knowledge of African American and military history.

Emma served as a board member of the Georgia Genealogical Society (GGS) for several years and was honored for her volunteer efforts by GGS on several occasions. She served as an adjunct instructor at the Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research (IGHR) when it was at Samford University in Birmingham, AL, where she taught "Researching African American Ancestors" course. She also served as Vice President of the Friends of the National Archives at Atlanta.

Ever the "Colonel," she was instrumental in marshaling Chapter members and others into producing numerous symposia -- complete with lectures, skits and other contextual performances -- on: Gullah Geechee culture (2012), Emancipation Proclamation's 150th Anniversary (2013), Civil Rights and the Railroads (2014), Reconstruction (2015 & 2016), World War I (2017), 1619-2019 Remembrance (2019), African American Heritage (2026) and more . . . all with partnerships she cultivated at the National Archives at Atlanta and the Georgia Archives.

Emma served in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and later in the United States Army after the WAC was incorporated into the Army in 1978. She subsequently transferred to the Medical Services Corps, where she worked in hospital administration at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. She retired from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1993.

Emma took a sincere interest in each member's research and often shared stories of her childhood and family history in Belle Glade, Florida. She was respected for her knowledge, her tenacity, and her straightforward way of speaking. Emma was a positive force in the lives of many, and she will be greatly missed.

[Click here](#) to see her reminisce about her life's journey from her beginnings to the military to genealogy in a 2022 interview for the Veterans History Project at the Atlanta History Center.