

## TFA Reunion Coming Soon

By John Paul Thrasher  
TFA president

We are looking forward to getting together in Micanopy, Fla., July 22-24 for the 2022 TFA Reunion. Our fun-filled weekend includes visiting several area historical sites and attractions, including the Thrasher Warehouse, which houses the Micanopy Historical Society Museum; shopping and strolling in Micanopy's charming moss-shrouded downtown; and sampling local cuisine with your cousins. I hope you will join us.

We have reserved all 13 rooms at the historic Herlong Mansion Bed & Breakfast. Room rates for two nights, including taxes, range from \$308 to \$604, depending on the room chosen. Check [www.herlong.com](http://www.herlong.com) to see room choices, but don't try to make a reservation online; you'll be advised that there is no availability. To make a reservation, call owner Kim Shore at 352-466-3322. We have a hold on all rooms until June 15, which is also the reunion registration deadline.

See **WELCOME**, p. 2



The Herlong Mansion Bed & Breakfast had humble beginnings as a two-story "cracker farmhouse" built in 1845. By 1910, lumber baron Zeddy Clarence Herlong, had used his riches to transform it into the elegant mansion that has operated as a bed and breakfast since the 1980s.

## Explore Micanopy While You're Here

By Paula Thrasher

The north central Florida town of Micanopy covers just slightly more than one square mile. Only 630 people—give or take—call it home, including our own John E. Thrasher III. But while it may be little, Micanopy has a lot going on.

The Thrasher Family Association will visit the 201-year-old town July 22-24 for its annual reunion. Headquarters will be the circa 1845 Herlong Mansion Bed & Breakfast in the historic district on the town's main thoroughfare, Chokolka Boulevard. Micanopy, named for a Seminole Indian chief, became the first distinct town in the Florida territory in 1821 and is the oldest inland community in Florida.

The Thrasher Warehouse, built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, is now home to the Micanopy Historical Society Museum, which features the J.E. Thrasher General Store and more than two dozen other exhibits. The property is owned by the town of Micanopy. The warehouse is one of 39 sites on the National Register of Historic Places. It is an easy two-block walk from the Herlong Mansion.

See **EXPLORE MICANOPY**, p. 2

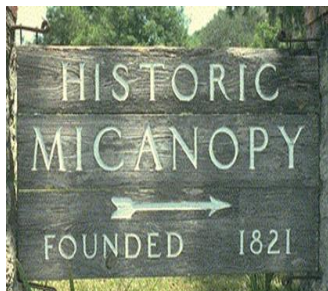
## WELCOME (from p. 1)

Rooms are on a first come, first served basis. If you want to stay somewhere other than the Herlong, consider Gainesville, which is 15 minutes away with many hotel choices. There are also some Airbnb properties in the Micanopy area that provide another option.



**John Paul Thrasher**  
**TFA president**

Finally, we want to make sure this weekend is as safe as possible for everyone. We strongly recommend that everyone be up to date on Covid vaccinations. This is a recommendation, not a requirement. We'll be in Florida so masks will not be required but if you feel more comfortable wearing one, please do so. I look forward to being with my fellow TFA members as we explore our shared Thrasher heritage.



## EXPLORE MICANOPY (from p. 1)

The red brick Herlong, with its four stately white Corinthian columns and a second story veranda, is also on the National Register of Historic Places. A bed and breakfast since 1980, the mansion and its Long Hall event space on property will be our base of operations.

Built along an Indian trading route that is now Chokolka Boulevard, the original house that became the Herlong Mansion was originally a modest two-story "cracker style" pine home built circa 1845. Zeddy Clarence Herlong, who made his fortune in the lumber industry, turned the simple farmhouse into an elegant mansion by 1910. The grounds today are covered with palms, magnolias and statuesque live oaks draped with moss. Azaleas, camellias, roses and other flowers and plants bloom nearly year-round.

Stroll a couple of blocks from the Herlong, and you will be in the charming downtown with its many antique shops – so many, in fact, that the town is the self-proclaimed "Antiques Capital of Florida." Also downtown, you will find gift shops, art galleries, cafes and an ice cream and coffee shop called Coffee N Cream. Note that most local businesses tend to be closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

It's not hard to see why Hollywood fell in love with Micanopy and its rustic storefronts, historic homes and old "cracker houses." The town stands in for such films as "Cross Creek" (1983) and "Doc Hollywood" (1991).

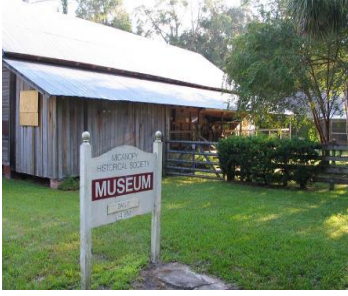
Speaking of "Cross Creek," that's the name of the tiny community in rural Alachua County where author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings made her home. We will spend a couple of hours Saturday afternoon at the writer's home and grounds, now a state park. Tours of the farmhouse with guides dressed in period costume offer a glimpse of 1930s farm life.

It is here that Rawlings wrote the Pulitzer Prize-winning "The Yearling" (1938). Among her other books is "Cross Creek" in which she vividly describes her day-to-day life on the farm. The "cracker homestead" and farmyard were designated a National Historic Landmark in 2007.

While we won't have time to visit Tusawilla Preserve, Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park or Price's Scrub State Park, you may want to check out these sites on your own Friday or Sunday afternoon.

The 600-acre Tusawilla Preserve comprises a prairie, virgin woodlands and an ancient lake. The John E. Thrasher III and Eleanor K. Thrasher Park is part of the Preserve, and the 1.5-mile Thrasher Trail loop is within

**(continued on next page)**



**Thrasher Warehouse, home of the Micanopy Historical Society and its museum, viewed from Cholokka Blvd.**



**The J.E. Thrasher General Store is among the more than two dozen exhibits at the Micanopy Historical Society Museum at the Thrasher Warehouse.**



**The “cracker farmstead,” where author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings lived and wrote, is in the tiny community of Cross Creek near Micanopy. Her most famous work is “The Yearling,” published in 1938. She won a Pulitzer Prize for the novel the next year. The farmhouse and grounds are now a state park.**

## **“Three of Micanopy’s best restaurants will be our caterers”**

the park. The Preserve is a popular destination for birders. Parking is across the street from the trailhead at the Micanopy Native American Preserve, which protects an Indian mound.

Paynes Prairie boasts that it is the only place in the state where you can see bison and wild horses from a 50-foot-tall observation tower. Price’s Scrub at nearly 1,000 acres is a biodiversity hotspot. Both parks feature miles of hiking trails and picnic tables.

As for dining, we promise not to send you home on an empty stomach. Three of Micanopy’s best restaurants will be our caterers for the reunion. On Friday night, we will drive about four miles from the Herlong to Antonio’s to enjoy Italian dishes in one of the restaurants event spaces. Antonio’s is part of old Harvest Village, which features four historic buildings that were relocated to the site around 1978. An 1890 citrus packing house is next to a staged gas station. Antonio’s is in a circa 1925 “cracker house.” A train station built in 1881 and moved from nearby Reddick in adjacent Marion County houses The Depot-Speakeasy, where upscale pub fare and drinks are served. On Saturday, the popular local eatery Blue Highway will bring their “Better Box Lunch” selections to the Herlong event space. A buffet from Pearl Country Store and Barbecue will be served for Saturday night’s dinner in the event space.

Most likely, you’ll learn a lot of things during your short visit to Micanopy. Not the least of which is how to pronounce “Cholokka.”

Some good sites to look at online before your visit are:

[www.micanopytown.com](http://www.micanopytown.com)

[www.floridarambler.com/historic-florida-getaways/micanopy-fl](http://www.floridarambler.com/historic-florida-getaways/micanopy-fl)

[www.visitgainesville.com](http://www.visitgainesville.com)

[www.herlong.com](http://www.herlong.com)

[www.micanopyhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.micanopyhistoricalsociety.com)

### **Thrasher Family Association Newsletter, Vol. 40, No. 1**

[www.thrasherfamilyassociation.com](http://www.thrasherfamilyassociation.com)

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## TFA Reunion Schedule, July 22-24

### Friday, July 22: "A Taste of Italy in Micanopy"

- 4:00 p.m. Check into accommodations.
- 6:00 p.m. Meet in the lobby of the Herlong Mansion (402 NE Chokolka Blvd.). Plan to carpool to dinner if you wish.
- 6:15 p.m. Depart for dinner from the Herlong.
- 6:30-8:30 p.m. Dinner at Antonio's (22050 N. U.S. Hwy 441).

### Saturday, July 23: "Heritage and History"

- 7:00 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast at the Herlong Mansion for guests of the inn.
- 9:00 - 10:30 a.m. TFA Annual Meeting in Long Hall, the Herlong Mansion event space.
- 10:30 - 11:45 a.m. Free time to explore Micanopy's antique stores, art galleries and gift shops.
- 12:00 -12:45 p.m. Box lunches available for pick up at Long Hall. Enjoy your box lunch from Blue Highway in the event space or on the grounds,
- 1:00-2:00 p.m. Tour Micanopy Historical Society Museum located inside the old Thrasher Warehouse (607 NE Chokolka Blvd.).
- 2:15 p.m. Depart for Cross Creek.
- 2:30-4:30 p.m. Tour of the 1928 home of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, best known for her book *The Yearling*. An optional guided farmhouse tour begins at 3:00 p.m. (the last of the day). We'll be driving individually or carpooling.
- 6:30-8:30 p.m. BBQ dinner served in the Herlong's Long Hall.
- 8:30 p.m. Linger awhile to visit with your cousins after dinner.

### Sunday, July 24: "We Say Our Good-byes"

- 7:30 - 9:00 a.m. Breakfast at the Herlong Mansion.
- 9:00 a.m. Visit with your "cousins" until checkout at noon.

If you have questions or need additional information about the TFA 2022 Micanopy Reunion, please contact John Paul Thrasher at [john.thrasher@numail.org](mailto:john.thrasher@numail.org) or call/text him at 770-328-3991. The registration fee is \$100 per person, which covers Friday dinner, Saturday box lunch, Saturday dinner and other reunion expenses. Deadline for registration is June 15. Please make your check payable to John Paul Thrasher.

### 2022 TFA Reunion Registration (Deadline June 15)

Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Coming from \_\_\_\_\_

Number Attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Arrival time \_\_\_\_\_

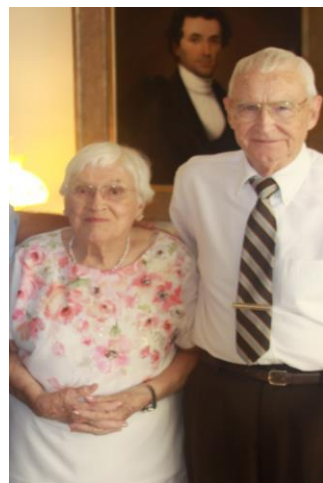
Please mail check and completed registration to: John Paul Thrasher, 5 Woodridge Place, Newnan, GA 30265. Tel: 770-328-3991. Email: [john.thrasher@numail.org](mailto:john.thrasher@numail.org)

## Renaissance Man—John E. Thrasher, III

by David E. Sumner

John E. Thrasher, III, is a pianist, singer, genealogist, educator, historian, farmer, gardener, and community leader—the kind of man with less time during retirement than he had during his 36-year career as a teacher and educator. Since retiring in his hometown of Micanopy in 1990, he has played an important leadership role in enhancing the community as one of the most eminent historic small towns in the Southeast. It is the oldest inland town in Florida with 39 places on the National Historic Register. Originally called “Micanope” after the Seminole Indian chief (1785-1847), it was later named Micanopy.

John has also played a significant leadership role in the Thrasher Family Association since it was founded in 1974. He has attended 40 of the 44 Thrasher Family reunions, hosted five, and served as president from 2004-2018. At a time when voluntary organizations are declining, he attributes the longevity of the association to building relationships and friendships. “As new people joined, I contacted them and kept in touch and helped them with genealogy. Like Dr. David [Thrasher], I helped him work on his family history. One thing I tried to do was be in contact and get to know the members, especially the new members. The camaraderie is very important. That’s a big factor in having a successful family association,” he said in a recent telephone interview.



**John and Eleanor at their  
60th wedding anniversary  
celebration in 2015**

I attended my first Thrasher reunion in 1992 in Columbus, Georgia, and John was the first person we met. As soon as I walked in the door with my wife and two sisters, he rushed to introduce himself and make us feel welcome and introduce us to other Thrasher cousins.

It’s now 30 years later and at age 93, I asked John E. to what habits he attributes his long and productive life. “I don’t know. I don’t know,” he said with a laugh. He said, “It’s probably DNA” since both his parents died at age 93 although six years apart.

John went to college 10 miles up the road in Gainesville. After graduating from the University of Florida, John served in the U.S. Army from 1950-52. During his Army tour in Germany, he met his wife, Eleanor, in Paris, and they married in 1955. They returned to Gainesville where he earned a master’s in education in 1954. From there, they went to Jacksonville where they lived for 36 years. He taught at Lake Shore Junior High School for 12 years and worked as a guidance counselor, curriculum director and “everything else except principal” for 22 years. “I felt very happy and satisfied with my career. They really didn’t want to see me retire,” he said.

John and Eleanor were married for 62 years before she died in December 2017. “She was just super. We had a very long, happy marriage. She was a wonderful cook and wrote cookbooks for the Thrasher Association and for the Micanopy Historical Society,” he said. His son, John F. Thrasher, lives a half hour away in Newberry and visits every weekend. His daughter, Gretchen Thrasher Harris and her husband live in Del Mar, California. John has five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The Thrasher Warehouse, Thrasher Store and the former home of John's grandparents are among Micanopy sites on the National Register of Historic Places and also on the Alachua County History Commission's website. The first Thrasher store burned in 1911, and the business was moved into the warehouse from 1911-1923. A new store was built in 1923. The Thrasher Warehouse was built on a Florida Southern railroad spur in 1896 by John Early Thrasher, Sr. (John's grandfather) who moved here from Madison, Georgia, in 1875.

Describing the family story, John says, "My father bought out his brother's interest in 1931 when my grandfather retired and managed it until 1973. It was a general store and sold everything except beer and coffins. We used to say, 'We don't serve the dead or the drunk.' We even raised cattle and horses out back and sold them."

John was founding president of the Micanopy Historical Association in 1983 and served as president for two terms and treasurer and secretary. The museum was started in 1984. "I've been the archivist for the last 11 years since 2011. It involves collecting and editing materials. We have a lot of people coming and doing research, particularly on family history. I have an appointment tomorrow morning who is looking for cemetery and family records. I've devoted a whole lot of time to that in the last few years."

In 2009, he and Eleanor donated 117 acres to the Alachua County Preservation Trust. The nature preserve now includes a lake, Thrasher Park, and Thrasher Trail. They are located less than a mile east of downtown Micanopy across from the Native American Heritage Park, which commemorates the Battle of Micanopy in 1836. For this and his leadership in restoring and preserving Micanopy's historic buildings, he received a Historic Preservation Award from the Daughters of the American Revolution in 2015.

He has been growing camellias for many years and is past president of the Gainesville Camellia Society. "I am very active in that and also a certified judge by the American Camellia Society. I have 240 Camellia varieties in my yard. They're blooming now and very gorgeous. That's not very many compared with some of the members who have 1,500 varieties."



Besides his work in historic preservation and gardening, "I consider myself a dedicated genealogist," John says. "I have compiled four different books on my father's family, my mother's family and Eleanor's family. We've done a lot of traveling to cemeteries and courthouses all over the South. I've contacted people through state records. Everywhere I go I pursue it. I am a member of the Jamestown Society, which means my ancestors were in Jamestown in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century—before the Mayflower."

What is the value of studying family history? "It makes your life richer. I really enjoy it and feel like I know some of these people I have done so much research on. I feel wonderful knowing about my ancestors and think about them a great deal."

## TFA Annual Meeting Minutes, 8/28/2021

by TFA Secretary Nancy Thrasher Cherry

**Attendance:** Joe and Joan Stine, Ivy and Klaus Darnall, Joe and Angie Grooms, Anna and Ken Sutherland, Dr. Peggy Pleasants Thrasher, Celestea Sharp, John and Paula Thrasher, Warren and Emily Thrasher, Dr. Sue Thrasher, Don and Peggy Law, Linda Bishop, Carol Bishop. **Participating by Zoom:** Linda Gee, John E. Thrasher, Nancy Thrasher Cherry.

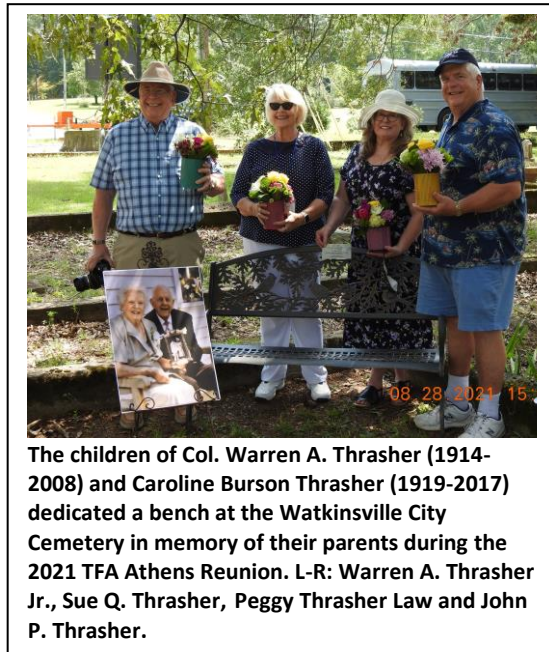
**Call to Order at: 9:36 a.m. in SpringHill Suites, Downtown Athens, GA.** John Paul Thrasher called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, noted that this was the first meeting since the 2019 meeting in Davidson, NC. The 2020 meeting was cancelled due to the COVID pandemic. He outlined the plans for the afternoon: lunch at the Botanical Gardens, then travel to Watkinsville Cemetery for dedication of a bench in memory of Warren and Caroline Thrasher (parents of Warren Jr., Sue, John Paul and Peggy), time to explore downtown Watkinsville, and finally, a visit to the Salem Methodist Church. Saturday night we had dinner at the Hot Thomas Cotton Gin before returning to the reunion hotel. Travel provided by coach.

**Minutes:** Celestea Sharp read the 2019 meeting minutes, which were written by Nancy Cherry. Anna Sutherland's motion, seconded by Linda Bishop, to accept the minutes as written was approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** Angie Grooms reported on income and expenditures for the year. The current balance is \$5,860.57. There have been donations, including a \$1,000 donation from Grady Thrasher for expenses of this reunion.

**Newsletter:** We now have a newsletter committee consisting of John Paul Thrasher, John E. Thrasher, Joe Stine, Jeff Thompson, Nancy Cherry, and David Sumner. Newsletters are published four times a year. John Paul made special mention of Joe Stine's and John E. Thrasher's genealogy research and contributions.

**Website:** John Paul marveled that it was only in 2013 that the group discussed creating a website. He called on Dr. Sue to describe recent and future updates to the site. Dr. Sue asked members to send her materials to be posted, reminding the group that there is no space limitation. She relies on Jeff Thompson, who publishes the newsletter, to provide her with an updated membership lists which she posts in a password protected portion of the website. Discussion about moving the newsletters from the current open page of the website to a password-protected page was prompted by Celestea's experience of having an article she had written plagiarized by a reporter. Celestea had written the article for *Athens Magazine* but had received permission from the magazine to post it on the TFA website. Dr. Sue will look into the matter. The website is now posting obituaries and ancestors' pictures. The idea of a photo gallery was proposed by Jim Moule at a previous reunion, and he has contributed his old photographs.



Linda Bishop has pictures to contribute to the website. Dr. Sue invited contributions and accepted in many electronic formats. She requests that each photo be accompanied by identifying details.

**DNA Project:** John Paul mentioned that his son-in-law, an adoptee, had found a sister and was discovering family through DNA studies.

**New Business -- Incorporation:** John Paul thanked Joe and Angie and Dr. Peggy for getting the new bank account set up after much red tape and delay. New banking rules suggest that it is time for TFA to explore forming an entity, to incorporate. A second step in this process would be to file as a 501(c) 3, tax exempt entity, which would have benefits for anyone wishing to make a sizeable donation to the TFA. Celestea indicated her approval of the idea, and Ken Sutherland reminded us of his years at the IRS and that he would volunteer to work with a committee to examine the feasibility of and requirements for incorporation. Joe Stine offered a motion, and Joe Grooms seconded it, that the officers look into the matter. The motion passed unanimously.

**Change in Dues Collection:** Dr. Sue suggested that the bylaws be changed to allow the TFA to be self-supporting through contributions rather than through our rigid \$20/year dues requirement. She believes that with a suggested contribution of \$20 or more, some individuals will donate more, thus covering membership for those who cannot, or forget to, pay annual dues. She suggests a button on the website allowing contributions to be transferred directly to the bank account, thus freeing the treasurer from the burden of chasing members to collect dues. John Paul mentioned his reluctance to remove names from the membership lists. As long as we send delinquent members e-newsletters, which cost nothing to send, he is in favor of keeping their contact information on the list. Our intention is to include more Thrasher descendants, rather than discouraging or excluding them.

One person expressed a danger that the mailing list could be stolen and used for other purposes. For the price of a small donation, an unscrupulous person could gain access to the password-protected list. Dr. Sue suggested that we put applications forms, to include information on family history, online on a separate tab from the donation tab. Application data would be vetted before access to the password-protected areas of the website was granted. Dr. Peggy suggested that we should change our dues year from July-June to January-December. The current dues year is confusing and results in checks arriving all through the year. John Paul announced that the current dues collection plan will remain in effect for the coming year and that the matter is tabled for the moment. These ideas will be discussed by the Officers Committee when incorporation is discussed.

**Special Recognition:** John Paul gave a shout-out of appreciation to John E. Thrasher for his 14 years of leadership to the TFA. Adjournment: 11:01 a.m.



**"Thrasher Cousins" pose for a picture at the 2021 TFA Reunion on Saturday, Aug. 28, after a BBQ supper at the Thomas Cotton Gin in Watkinsville (Oconee County, GA). Seated L-R: Emily Thrasher, Celestea Sharp, Joan Stine, Klaus Darnall, Joe Stine, Carol Bishop, Judy Smith and Linda Bishop. Standing L-R: Jennifer McGrath, Dr. Sue Thrasher, Peggy Thrasher Law, Don Law, Warren Thrasher Jr., Angie Grooms, Joe Grooms, Dr. Peggy P. Thrasher, Ken Sutherland, Anna Sutherland, Ivy Darnall, Paula Thrasher, Tom Smith, Keith Black, Debra Concannon Black, Joe Tanner and John Paul Thrasher.**



***Hidden History of Old Atlanta* by Mark Pifer. Published by The History Press, Charleston, S.C., 2021. 208 pages. \$21.99 paperback. Reviewed by David E. Sumner**

A new book about the early history of Atlanta reveals fresh information about Cousin John Thrasher, even more than Franklin Garrett's epic *Atlanta and Its Environs* or my booklet, *John Thrasher: Georgia Pioneer, Politician and Philanthropist*, which was published in 2017. Pifer, a Decatur, GA, resident, begins with the geographical history of north Georgia. The Creek Indians sold the land that eventually became the greater Atlanta area to the U.S. Government in 1821.

Georgia was behind the rest of the country in railroad building. "Georgia's lethargic start in the railroad race had left it far behind the rest of the South," he writes. Chapter 10 covers the debate in the Georgia legislature between 1830 and 1839 about when and where to build a new railroad to connect Chattanooga with the existing lines between Macon, Savannah, and Columbus.

By a narrow 76-65 vote, the Georgia Legislature voted in 1836 where to build the "terminus" of this new railroad. This spot was "where the Monroe Railroad planned to meet up with the Georgia Railroad coming from the east and the Western and Atlantic that would run north to Chattanooga." Without realizing it, the legislature chose the location of what became Georgia's largest and most famous city. This location had one problem, however. "The ground at this point was too low for the Monroe to meet smoothly with the Western and Atlantic. An embankment would need to be built to raise up the ground and make a smooth junction with the other railroads," Pifer writes.

**This is where Cousin John walked into the Georgia history books.** Pifer tells this story beginning in chapter 12, "John Thrasher and the Founding of Terminus." The Monroe Railroad called for bids to build the embankment and Thrasher won with a \$25,000 bid (about \$800,000 in today's money). The embankment that Thrasher and his laborers built remains today near the Georgia World Congress Center as the "oldest structure within the city limits original to this pioneering period."

Nearly all of Cousin John's 30 workers came from Europe, where jobs were scarce, and the Great Famine was just beginning. Most were Irish. His first job was to build shanties to house the workers and a general store. Some called the settlement "Thrasherville," but this was never an official name. Pifer says Cousin John made about a 40 percent profit on the project after paying salaries and expenses, netting him about \$320,000 in today's money. He had become a wealthy man at age 22.

**Jonathan Norcross, who was elected Atlanta's fourth mayor in 1850,** became one of Thrasher's best friends during the ensuing years. When Thrasher founded the town of Norcross in 1870, he insisted on naming it after his friend, not after himself. Norcross, a native of Maine, became wealthy building a sawmill and later a store. He was also a scholar who wrote five books. "Norcross was a unionist. He never supported the tenets of secession. He greatly regretted that the Civil War had not been avoided," Pifer writes. "The settlement of Atlanta and much of the reason it became successful in its early years can be attributed to Norcross more than any other person. He had more of a vision for the city than anyone else and was amazingly effective in carrying it out."

Pifer, however, never minimizes the influence of Thrasher during Atlanta's early years. He is discussed and frequently quoted in three of the book's 33 chapters. The greatest weakness of *Hidden History of Old Atlanta* is that it lacks an index, which makes it difficult to find specific people and places. Although it contains a bibliography, it also contains no footnotes, which makes it impossible to know where specific information originated. However, the book is easy to read, and I highly recommend it to TFA readers. I am grateful to Dr. Gene Ramsay for calling this book to our attention. He is the historian who gave a talk about Norcross history and helped organize our entertainment when TFA met there in 2015.