

Who is Harriet Powers?

The year 2010 marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Harriet Powers, a legendary African American quilter. Born into slavery in Madison County, Georgia in 1837, Ms. Powers spent most of her life in the Sandy Creek area of Clarke County. Two of her quilts are known to exist, and they are in the collections of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Smithsonian Institution. The quilts are both artistically and historically important. They record stories from the Bible, astronomical events and oral history. They also provide a visual link between textile traditions in West Africa and in the African American community.

In December 2005, Catherine Holmes, a doctoral student in history at the University of Georgia, and her husband, David Berle, associate professor of Horticulture at UGA, discovered Ms. Power's grave in the Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery in north Athens. The date of her death, January 1, 1910, had not been known until her grave was uncovered.

Ms. Powers was named a Georgia Woman of Achievement in 2009. A number of books have been written about her, and the Athens-Clarke County Library supported a "Stitching Stars" storytelling festival in her honor for several years. In 1990, the Smithsonian commissioned a play to be written about her life.

Despite this, there are many people in Athens/Clarke County and the surrounding area who know little or nothing about Ms. Powers. A major goal of this project is to make the public more aware of Ms. Powers and her work. A second goal is to honor other African American quilters who live in Northeast Georgia, carrying on the traditional craft that has been such an important part of their culture.



Photograph © Oct. 4, 2010 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

*Hands that Can Do:
A Centennial
Celebration of
Harriet Powers*
at

**The Athens-Clarke County Library
and Lyndon House Arts Center**

With support from the
Georgia Humanities Council



Hands That Can Do: A Centennial Celebration of Harriet Powers



October 5, 2010 - January 19, 2011

“Hands That Can Do: African American Quilters in Northeast Georgia” - This exhibit at the Lyndon House Arts Center honors the lives and work of 12 women from Clarke, Greene, Dekalb and Oglethorpe counties who have found joy and community around the quilting frame. The exhibition offers visual proof that this important traditional craft continues to be alive and well in this part of Georgia since the time of renowned local quilter Harriet Powers 100 years ago. *The Lyndon House Arts Center is a facility of Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Department and is supported in part by the Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) through the appropriations of the Georgia General Assembly. GCA also receives support from its partner agency, the National Endowment for the Arts. Special funding for this exhibition came from Rebecca Lockman and the Turner Family Foundation.*

Tuesday, October 5 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Opening Reception for “Hands That Can Do” exhibit - The public is invited to attend this opening reception at the Lyndon House Arts Center and meet the artists. Refreshments will be served.

Lyndon House Arts Center Gallery Hours:

Tues. & Thurs., 12 :00 - 9:00 p.m.

Wed., Fri., & Sat., 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Lyndon House Arts Center

293 Hoyt Street, Athens · (706) 613-3623

www.accleisureservices.com/lyndon.shtml

**Harriet Powers Week at
the Athens-Clarke County Library**

Sunday, October 24 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.

“Hands That Can Do” Kick-Off Event - Join us for a fun family-centered afternoon of storytime and crafts at the Library! Local storyteller Jackie Elsner will tell stories in the Auditorium at 2:30 p.m., followed by quilting crafts in the Children’s Area. Free and open to the public.

Tuesday, October 26 12:15 - 1:00 p.m.

Brown Bag Discussion: Mary Brown and Harriet Powers: Two African American Quilters’ Centennials - 2010 marks the centennial of the death of **Harriet Powers** and the 100th birthday of **Mary Bell Leslie Brown**. What do we know about these two women, and what do they have to teach us? Diane Barret will share not only their histories but also their wisdom and faith as revealed through their quilts and their stories. Feel free to bring a lunch to this 45-minute program. In the Library’s Small Conference Room.

Wednesday, October 27 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Wildcard Wednesday: Harriet Powers - Harriet Powers’ quilts, which use pictures to tell stories that were significant to her, are found in museums in Boston and Washington, D.C. Come make a quilt square out of felt that tells a story which is significant to you, and we’ll display them in the Young Adult Department at the Library. Free and open to the first 15 teens ages 11-18.

Thursday, October 28 7:00 p.m.

A Night of Music - Enjoy a free concert featuring two local Gospel groups, **Voices of Praise** and **Teresa Haynes and Spiritual Harmony**. In the Library’s Auditorium.

Athens-Clarke County Library

2025 Baxter Street, Athens

(706) 613-3650

www.clarke.public.lib.ga.us

Saturday, October 30 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Harriet Powers Symposium - Join us in the Lyndon House Arts Center’s Community Room for an all-day symposium of speakers on Harriet Powers, the textile traditions of West Africa and African American quilters in Northeast Georgia. The day will feature various speakers, including author and quilter Kyra Hicks, fabric artist and storyteller Wini McQueen, painter, writer, and photographer, Lynn Marshall-Linnemeier, and quilter and art educator Diane Barret. The day will also include an African textile market and a book signing by Hicks, who will sign copies of her recent book on Harriet Powers, “This I Accomplish: Harriet Powers Bible Quilt and Other Pieces.” Program sponsored by the Georgia Humanities Council. Free and open to the public.

Sunday, October 31 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Commemorative Church Service - Join us at New Grove Baptist Church, 1228 Mooresgrove Road, Winterville, for a special church service celebrating the life of Harriet Powers. Followed by a visit to Ms. Powers’ gravesite at Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery.

Saturday, November 20 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Family Day at the Lyndon House Arts Center - Families are invited to this special Harriet Powers-themed day at the Lyndon House Arts Center for some hands-on art projects. Free for families. Sponsored and led by the Georgia Museum of Art.

“Hands That Can Do: A Centennial Celebration of Harriet Powers” is by a partnership between the Athens-Clarke County Library and the Lyndon House Arts Center with support from the Georgia Humanities Council