

A Shotgun House

Preserving Georgetown's African-American History

By Ellen Davis

When the old Carver High School was torn down in the fall of 1964, much of the history of Georgetown's African-American community went down with it. "We lost all our attendance records, all our pictures, even most of the UIL trophies," says Paulette Taylor, who was a member of the last class to attend the all-black Carver High School.

Today, Taylor and other members of Georgetown's African-American community are trying to preserve their history in a tiny shotgun house that sits behind the former Georgetown library at 801 West Street. The house, which was built sometime between 1920 and 1930, is one of three shotgun houses that originally stood on the property. Taylor says the mint-green color

on the outside of the house is close to the original color of the house. In 1997, former Mayor Leo Wood and the Georgetown City Council proposed to save the dilapidated house as a museum. Members of the Georgetown Cultural Citizens Memorial Association, which was founded in 1952, helped raise money to restore the house and worked with 1113 Architects of Georgetown on the restoration.

The three-room house, which once housed a family of five, is packed with a combination of furniture and memorabilia. The front room in the house has a "Wall of Fame" that includes tributes to prominent members of the African-American community such as Dr. James Dickey, a Taylor physician who delivered most of the African-American babies in Georgetown

because they were not allowed at the Georgetown hospital; Mary Bailey, the founder and director of a daycare center for local residents; community activist Willie Hall; Winford Bonner, Georgetown's first African-American city council member; and Carl Henry, who went on to become the music supervisor for the Dallas Independent School District. "There are lots of African-Americans from Georgetown who have gone on and left legacies," Taylor says. The room also has photos of prominent African Americans who have visited Georgetown, including Alex Haley, Jesse Jackson and Desmond Tutu.

Much of the historical material in the room came from Taylor's aunt, Ethyl Moore, whom Taylor says "saved everything from the newspaper." Many of the furnishings in the house came from Moore as well. The middle room of the house is set up the way a bedroom might have been, with a bed, dresser and wardrobe. The back room of house recreates the original kitchen,



(l-r) Samantha Taylor, Kaylee Taylor and Haley Satterfield greet visitors to the shotgun house on West Street. All three are granddaughters of Paulette Taylor, who has led efforts to help preserve the history of Georgetown's African-American community.

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and contains an old washboard, ironing board and ice box.

The shotgun house sits just a block off Martin Luther King Jr. St. (formerly Timber Street), which used to be the heart of Georgetown's African-American community. Taylor and other long-time residents fondly remember former restaurants and businesses that used to be located on the street such as Herb Rose's barber shop, the Troy Laundry, Jerome's Café and Mama Lee's. "There was such good cooking on Timber Street," Taylor says.

Many African-American churches also used to be located on Timber Street and Carver High School (which was originally called Marshall High School) was located at the end of the street. The original Mary Bailey Head Start Center (which is now on College Street) was next to the high school.

The Georgetown Cultural Citizens Memorial Association is currently trying to raise enough money to put a permanent restroom behind the shotgun house, which would help make it more accessible. They also would like to have the museum open on a regular basis. For now, the museum is only open by appointment, and anyone interested in touring the museum should contact Keith Scott, the current president of the association, at 512-422-3898 to arrange a tour.

While giving a recent tour to a busload of visitors from the Round Rock Black History Organization, Taylor said she particularly enjoys showing the house to children. Many children today, she says, are simply unaware of the struggles her generation went through in the 1950s and 1960s. "Life wasn't always the way it is now," she says. "I hope I live



The Wall of Fame

to see bus tours of children coming here from the schools."

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