

On the cover: From Left to right, Annie Johnson, Gilbert Johnson and Gillian Barton Sinclair are descendants of Ellen Barton, a former slave who once lived in the area of the Avondale Burial Place and who likely had family or friends buried at the cemetery. The three are ancestors of Herman "Skip" Mason, Jr., whose family is pictured inside.

These artifacts were all recovered with individual burials. Each object, which was carefully placed in the ground with the deceased person over 100 years ago, was placed back with the individual during reburial of the cemetery. Pictured are a **porcelain doll** found in the arms of a child buried at the cemetery; a **black brooch** with a rose which may have represented a piece of mourning jewelry and was found near a woman's chest; and a **Presidential campaign token for William Henry Harrison** which was worn on a string around the neck of an adult buried at Avondale Burial Place.



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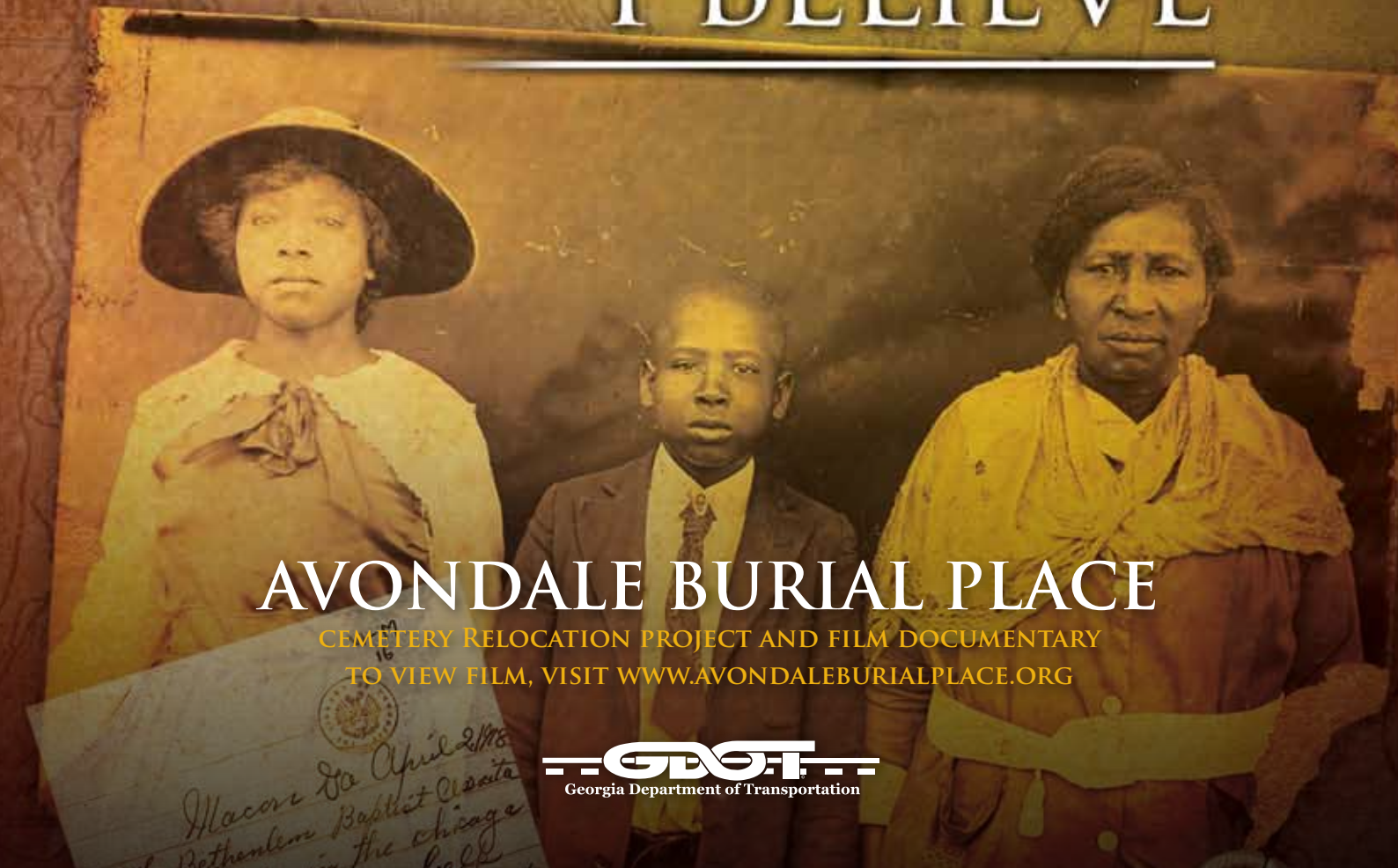


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I REMEMBER, I BELIEVE





Rachel Black, a mortuary archaeologist, excavates an adult burial at Avondale Burial Place. The coffin outline and square vault outline are visible in the photograph.

WELCOME TO THE AVONDALE BURIAL PLACE



What we discovered.

The Avondale Burial Place was an African American cemetery located near the communities of Avondale and Walden in southern Bibb County, Georgia. Reported to the Georgia Department of

Transportation by a local landowner, there were no permanent monuments or depressions marking the burials. The Department was in the process of right-of-way negotiations for the Sardis Church Road Extension Project, which would connect Interstate-75 to State Route 247 near the Middle Georgia

Regional Airport, when the cemetery was discovered in 2008. Due to other environmental constraints, including a marked family cemetery and lake, the site could not be avoided in planning for the road extension. The cemetery was located in the corner of four land lots, a location that would have been difficult to plow and could not be cultivated. New South Associates, Inc., a cultural resource management firm specializing in mortuary archaeology, was hired to complete the relocation. A total of 101 burials, believed to be former slaves and tenant farmers who lived in the surrounding area, were identified, recovered, and reburied as part of this project.

The arrangement of the graves suggests several African American families in the area used the cemetery during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The burials were found in clusters that likely represented different family groupings. Additionally, census research identified the following African American names in the area around the cemetery as: Bagly, Barton, Bivins, Brown, Burgay, Castillo, Collins, Cumming, Dean, Dickson, Dixon, Durden, Glover, Johnson, Jones, McLennon, Mitchell, Moore, Reese, Ryder, Thomas, Wilder and Williams. As African American families left the area for opportunities elsewhere during a period referred to as the Great Migration, the cemetery was left behind.

Our work. Our mission.

This project was led by archaeologist Sara Gale and historian Sharman Southall from the Office of Environmental Services, with support from staff across the Department. Georgia DOT District 3 maintenance staff assisted in the initial stripping used to identify the cemetery; and the right-of-way staff was essential in negotiating the contract for the reburial site. Surveyors from the Office of Design Policy and Support surveyed both the original cemetery and the reburial site; and many others played important roles in the success of this project.

Sarah McIntyre (left) and Valeria Davis (right), mortuary archaeologists with New South Associates, map the corners of burials. Each piece of plastic covers a burial yet to be recovered.



Our role in recovery, relocation and reconnection. Georgia DOT worked closely with our consultant partner to carefully and respectfully recover the contents of the burials, study the remains and rebury them. All remains, associated objects, coffin hardware and grave details were carefully mapped, recorded, analyzed and reburied at a site in Peach County, Georgia. This work included DNA analysis of remains. Results were compared with DNA samples from the descendant community to reconnect the deceased with the living. At this time, two of the living descendants have been found to be directly related to two of the deceased recovered from the Avondale Burial Place. The Office of Environmental Services, with our consultant partner, conducted recovery conscientiously and with

consideration to the concerns of the descendant community. The Avondale Burial Place and local African American history were documented through a detailed report of the removal, analysis, and reburial; a project website; a film; and a marked reburial site. This project underscores Georgia DOT's commitment to providing a transportation system that is sensitive to the environment and its citizens and which seeks to be a steward for history across our state.

For more information and to view the documentary film about the project, visit www.avondaleburialplace.org.



The Barton-Thomas families visit the Avondale Burial Place in Bibb County during the "Two Sisters Family Reunion." Historian Herman "Skip" Mason, Jr. (kneeling far right) is a descendant of Ellen Barton, a former slave who lived in the area and who likely had family or friends buried at the cemetery.