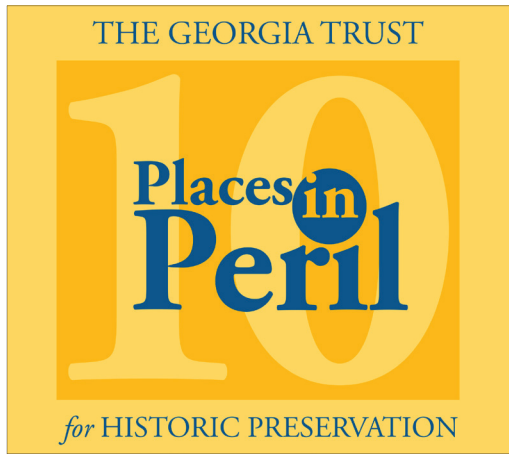


GA's first countywide Conservancy blossoms this spring



1883 Foster-Thomason-Miller House to be sold to the Madison-Morgan Conservancy.

Now protecting a 'Place in Peril'



By **Christine McCauley Watts**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MADISON-MORGAN CONSERVANCY

The Madison-Morgan Conservancy has been protecting Morgan County's special places since its founder executed the first conservation easement in Morgan County in 2004. That easement permanently protects half an acre behind a historic house in Madison's Historic District – the half acre that led to thousands.

Thanks to the Conservancy's work over many years, thousands of acres of wildlife habitat, open space, farmland, and forests in Morgan County are permanently protected through voluntary, donated conservation easements. Three important historic structures have also been saved and/or restored in the county: the Wallace Grove School, the Malcom House, and the Sugar Creek Church. It's an effort to retain and perpetuate those resources critical to the quality of life of future generations.

Even with two State Preservation Awards under its belt, the Conservancy felt there was more to be accomplished. The Board assessed its programming during its strategic planning process two years ago and decided to explore the possibility of developing a revolving fund to "purchase, protect, divest, and reinvest in" endangered properties to be even more effective in protecting critical resources. Soon after that fateful meeting, the Board contracted a revolving fund feasibility study.

The positive findings from Hanbury Preservation Consulting's feasibility study led the Conservancy to launch a fundraising effort to raise \$1,250,000. Thanks to the Watson-Brown Foundation, The 1772 Foundation, countless contributions from individuals and corporations, and the recent supporters of the Derby Day Raffle, the Conservancy is 84 percent to its goal.

With partial funding secured, the Conservancy has contracted to purchase the Foster-Thomason-Miller House and adjoining lot on Main Street (1.8 acres), which was recently named on the GA Trust's "Places in

Peril" list. The closing date has been set for May 7th, after which the Conservancy will stabilize the building. Once stable, the property will be marketed to a "conservation buyer" who will agree to abide by a preservation agreement requiring certain construction by certain times. If this sounds familiar, it's because this is how most revolving funds work, including the GA Trust for Historic Preservation's Revolving Fund, which has saved at least two structures in Madison in the last 10 years.

The GA Trust has assisted the Conservancy in setting up this Endangered Properties Revolving Fund from the beginning and will continue to support the Conservancy's efforts. In fact, the GA Trust has agreed to market the sale of the property through their Rambler magazine and through their online channels. We are grateful for their support and look forward to collaborating with them on saving the Foster-Thomason-Miller House.

Anyone interested in protecting the Foster-Thomason-Miller House and the other endangered properties in Morgan County can contribute to the Conservancy's efforts by:

1. Contributing to the Endangered Properties Revolving Fund: www.mmcGeorgia.org/endangeredpropertiesrevolvingfund/
2. Donating property to the Conservancy (a tax deductible gift to a 501(c)3)
3. Joining the Conservancy as a member: www.mmcGeorgia.com/membership/

The Conservancy needs your financial support to ensure the safe passage of endangered properties to future generations. Every contribution will make a difference to the future of Morgan County.



Derby Day Raffle co-chairs Miryn Davidson and Sarah Ball with Conservancy staff Theresa Dickinson.

Foster-Thomason-Miller House FAQ

What is the Conservancy's Endangered Properties Revolving Fund (EPRF)?

- The EPRF is a pool of capital used to purchase, protect, divest, and reinvest in endangered properties which include historic structures and/or open space.
- Because the capital in this fund revolves from project to project, the EPRF will not only protect farms, forests, and front porches for this generation, it will be a tool that future generations can use to sustain their Morgan County.
- The Conservancy may use its EPRF for properties that are 1) significant (ecological, historical, agricultural, and/or cultural significance); 2) endangered (at risk of subdivision, overdevelopment, or demolition by neglect or will of historic fabric); 3) obtainable (willing seller or donor); 4) marketable (viable exit strategy); and 5) locally supported (community supports the project both financially and in action).
- The EPRF will not address all endangered properties in Morgan County, but it's a start to ensuring safe passage of some of our special places to future generations.

What is the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation's "Places in Peril" program?

- Places in Peril seeks to identify and preserve historic sites threatened by demolition, neglect, lack of maintenance, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy. <https://www.georgiatrust.org/our-programs/places-in-peril/>
- The annual list raises awareness about Georgia's significant historic, archaeological and cultural resources, including buildings, structures, districts, archaeological sites and cultural landscapes. Through this program, the Trust encourages owners and individuals, organizations, and communities to employ preservation tools, partnerships and resources necessary to preserve and utilize selected historic properties in peril.

What is an Endangered Property?

- The Conservancy defines an endangered property as a property with natural, agricultural, historic, or cultural significance at risk of subdivision, overdevelopment, or demolition by neglect or will.

What is a Conservation Buyer?

- The Conservancy defines a Conservation Buyer as a person or entity whose primary purpose for purchasing an endangered property is to restore/rehabilitate it and who is amenable to purchasing the property subject to preservation agreement and/or a conservation easement.

What is a Preservation Agreement?

- The Conservancy will draft a unique preservation agreement for each property it purchases through the EPRF. Each preservation agreement will require certain treatment by certain times to ensure the endangered property is restored/rehabilitated as soon as practicable.

What is a conservation easement?

- Conservation easements permanently protect publicly valuable resources.
- A conservation easement is a voluntary legal contract between a landowner and a qualified organization (land trust, government agency, or other organization qualified to hold this type of easement) which determines the use of the land in order to protect its conservation values.
- Even though the land use is restricted through the terms of the easement and those restrictions stay with the land forever, conservation easements allow landowners to use the property (often for income-producing purposes), to retain full ownership, and to sell it or give it to heirs.
- The land trust or other qualified organization "holds" the easement and is responsible for monitoring and defending its compliance in perpetuity.
- The Conservancy does not hold, monitor, and defend easements but rather partners with many land trusts for this service.

What is the Conservancy's plan for protecting the Foster-Thomason-Miller House?

- The goal of the EPRF is to secure endangered properties, stabilize them, and then market them to a conservation buyer who will agree to rehab the building to certain standards. The Foster-Thomason-Miller House is the first project of the EPRF.

Why is the Foster-Thomason-Miller House so important to protect?

- Built in 1883 by Daniel Townes on the foundation walls of one of the first chartered female academies in Georgia (The Georgia Female College, established by GA Legislature in 1850, burned 1880).
- This historic house is an excellent example of the American Aesthetic Movement, influenced by Oscar Wilde, and includes elements of the Queen Anne, Italianate, and Gothic Revival styles.
- It was restored in 1986 by Marci Miller (received 1986 GA Trust Award).
- It's a good house - approximately 5,000 sq. ft. overall. 8 main rooms, each approximately 400 sq. ft. (20 ft. by 20 ft.). 8 Fireplaces. 5 Bedrooms. 2 Full Bathrooms. Within walking distance to all the amenities in Downtown Madison.
- Significant interiors include bay windows, elaborate period frescoed ceilings, extensive wood carving, walnut and ash wainscoting, 10' high solid walnut sliding doors, detailed stenciling, faux bois and faux mabre finishes, and an alcove finished in rare gold-washed grotto paper.
- The house was built with its own gasification system, the first in Madison, probably a Springfield Gas Machine.
- The gas lantern on Main Street was Madison's first gas street light and was lit every evening by owner Lagare H. Foster.
- A fire broke out in the addition on the back of the house in 2001. Although the addition is badly damaged, the main house suffered mostly smoke and water damage.
- Vacant since fire. Structure is sound (and uniquely constructed out of furniture grade oak). Stabilization of roofs, windows, front porch, and back wall is currently needed.

Why is the Conservancy the best entity to save the Foster-Thomason-Miller House?

- We are in the business of protecting these types of resources and have a successful track record of doing so.
- We will require the building to be occupied by a certain time and rehabilitated to a certain standard.
- We can make sacrifices no other owner would make since we are not the typical investor – our measure of success is saving the resource, not profit.