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Arabia Alliance Celebrates History-Saving Preservation At DeKalb's Only Plantation Home

Five years after a delay caused by the COVID pandemic, the Arabia Alliance is ready to show off one of its most ambitious restoration projects: the stabilization of Lyon Farm, DeKalb's only plantation.

STONECREST, GA – A much-delayed celebration is finally coming to fruition. Five years ago, the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance (or Arabia Alliance) completed the largest historical preservation project in the nonprofit's history, as well as its largest public-private partnership for such an effort, partnering with the DeKalb County Department of Watershed Management (DWM) to stabilize and preserve Lyon Farm (Plantation) in Stonecrest. Then COVID struck, the world went into lockdown, and the Arabia Alliance never got to properly shine a light on its historic preservation efforts at Lyon Farm, the only plantation left in DeKalb. Until now, that is.

On August 14, from 9:30am-12pm, the staff of the Arabia Alliance will host "Celebrating Preservation, Conservation and Interpretation at Lyon Farm." Arabia Alliance staff, along with DeKalb County CEO Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, County Commissioners and community members, will all meet at the two-story home just north of the South River to finally celebrate a \$500,000-renovation that saved the historic Lyon Farm house and smokehouse (built circa 1821) from ruination. Half of that money came from DeKalb County DWM and the other half came from District 5 Commissioner Mereda Davis Johnson.

"This is our first chance to show off fully what we've done with Lyon Farm," said Revonda Cosby, Executive Director of the Arabia Alliance. "The public-private partnership between us and DeKalb County to protect, preserve, and conserve the structures, land and the stories of Lyon Farm descendants that matter most, has been one of the most significant projects that we've touched in our almost 20-year history."

"Celebrating Preservation, Conservation and Interpretation at Lyon Farm" will feature free sweet tea and biscuits, with sorghum syrup (just as the Lyons, who grew sorghum, would've done). At 9:30am DeKalb CEO Cochran-Johnson will speak, as will Commissioners, and Arabia Alliance staff. Following this, Arabia Alliance Assistant Executive Director and historian Brigette Jones will lead a tour of the Lyon Land. On this tour, visitors will learn about the settler history of how the land was farmed, and how the Lyons had at least seventeen enslaved people in 1860, and how the descendants of those people went on to create resilient communities in Flat Rock and Lithonia.

"We're honored to be hosting guests at the historic Lyon Farm in celebration of the preservation and conservation efforts happening there," said Brigette Jones. "As America nears its 250th birthday, now more than ever, we should be intentionally acting to engage with, better understand, and educate our communities on the realities and aftermath of the antebellum South. We at the Alliance are dedicated to telling full truths and engaging descendant communities in narrative creation, especially the descendants of the enslaved and indigenous communities." This

Celebration will also kick off new regular tours of Lyon Farm, with the aim of raising funds to revitalize the inside of the historic home into a museum space and first-rate historic destination in DeKalb County.

The Lyon family continuously inhabited the land from around 1820 until 2007, when they relinquished the property to DeKalb County, having sold it to the county in 2003. In 2003, the DeKalb County DWM purchased the property to buffer the Pole Bridge Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant. In 2016, the house was placed on the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation's "Places in Peril" list due to advanced structural damage, potential for imminent loss and its historic significance. The Arabia Alliance, DeKalb County DWM and contractor F. H. Paschen all came together and started work on the historic structure in October 2018, completing the stabilization in mid-2019. A celebration was hosted in May 2019, before the outside revitalization and installation of historical signage were finished. However, this is the public's first chance to celebrate the completed restoration and interpretation work.

[Please RSVP here](#) or email Communications Manager Jeff Dingler for a press pass at: jeff@arabiaalliance.org

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance works to protect, connect, and share the ecological and cultural assets of the 40,000-acre Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area just east of Atlanta, Georgia. With a focus on inclusive storytelling and equitable access to nature, the Alliance brings to life the region's rich history and biodiversity through community events, interpretive programs, and land stewardship across three counties: DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry. More info at arabiaalliance.org.