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People wait by the Arch to cross the street in downtown Athens, Georgia on Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2025. PHOTO/CAROLINE NEWBERN GRAPHIC/NORIN BORTZ

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Flowers in full bloom next to a historical marker and the Arch on the University of Georgia's North Campus in Athens, Georgia, on Thursday, March 26, 2026. PHOTO/JESSE CORSO

Athens and UGA Timeline

From 1785 to today

1785
The University of Georgia becomes the birthplace of public higher education in the U.S. when Georgia charters a state-supported university.

1801
John Milledge purchases and then donates 633 acres above the Oconee River for the college, now known as North Campus.

1804
The first class of students graduates from the university, which was known as Franklin College.

1806
The city of Athens is incorporated.

1859
The law school is founded and the school is renamed the University of Georgia.

1862
Congress passes the Morrill Act to raise money for colleges to teach agriculture and mechanical arts. When UGA receives these funds a decade later, it expands its curriculum.

1892
UGA plays its first football game against Mercer on North Campus' Herty Field (they won).

1918
White women are now allowed to enroll at UGA.

1929
Sanford Stadium was built, with expansions in later years.

1942
A Navy preflight training program operates on campus as part of the wartime effort.

1961
Charlayne Hunter-Gault and Hamilton Holmes become the first Black students to attend UGA. The Holmes-Hunter Academic Building on North Campus is later named in their honor.

1964
Stegeman Coliseum, originally named the Georgia Coliseum, is built for basketball and agricultural events.

1980
R.E.M. plays its first show at a friend's birthday party in the old St. Mary's Episcopal Church building.

1990
Athens forms a unified government with Clarke County, creating Athens-Clarke County.

1992
The HOPE Scholarship encourages Georgia high school students to remain in state for college. UGA's first-year enrollment increases fivefold in the following three decades.

1996
Sanford Stadium is repurposed as a soccer venue for the Olympics. The U.S. Women's team won the gold medal between the hedges.

2012
The UGA College of Engineering is established, bringing the total of colleges and schools within the university to 18.

2019
The field at Sanford Stadium is named after Vince Dooley.

2020
The College of Education is named in honor of Mary Frances Early, the first Black UGA graduate.

2023
The UGA football team wins its second consecutive national championship, the fourth in its history.

2024
Construction begins on UGA's School of Medicine, will open in fall 2026.

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Iconic Athenians

The names and faces that built the town

Sophia Eppley

Athens has long stood as a center of creativity and passion, shaped by its deep roots in music, education and social progress. The small town gave birth to the first state-chartered public university in the country, sparked a music revolution that echoed around the world and cultivated leaders who broke down barriers in the government.

Meet the Athenians who shaped the city’s past, opened doors that had long been closed and defined the city’s creative spirit.

Making history

To understand the history of Athens, you need to know three names: John Milledge, Abraham Baldwin and Elijah Clarke. Each played a vital role in laying the foundations of the town and the university that defines it.

In 1785, Baldwin and members of the Georgia legislature chartered the University of Georgia, the first publicly funded institution of higher learning in the U.S. Milledge, a prominent Georgia politician and later the founder of Athens, donated land which the campus was officially built on in 1801. That same year, Clarke County was established and named in honor of the Revolutionary War hero, Elijah Clarke.

Several years later, in 1805, Milledge officially founded the city of Athens, naming it after the ancient Greek city in hopes that it too would become a thriving center of learning and culture. Athens was formally incorporated in 1806.

“Without Milledge, Baldwin and Clarke, so many of our city’s attractions or streets would not exist,” Engagement Coordinator of Historic Athens Denise Sunta said. “And of course the county itself would not exist. The university would not exist.”

Two more Athenians that made history are Alfred Richardson and Madison Davis, ex-slaves that became the first two Black state legislatures to represent Clarke County in the late 1800s. They were able to win, according to Sunta, because this was before the implementation of Jim Crow laws that would later disenfranchise Black voters.

“Reconstruction was an interesting time in our history because it was just post-Emancipation so you had all of these people who suddenly had the power and ability to vote,” Sunta said. “Athens itself had a pretty large Black population at the time, so that’s how they won.”

Davis was more conservative and “white-passing,” according to Sunta, so was better equipped to navigate the social and political systems at the time. Richardson, on the other hand, was not “white-passing” and more politically radical, making him a target of mob violence, particularly from the Ku Klux Klan.

“We’re hoping to bring more awareness to these two people because I think that it’s important for us to recognize the fact that in Athens during Reconstruction we kind of had this elevation of Black life,” Sunta said.

Davis is buried at Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery and Richardson’s burial place is unknown, according to Fred Smith, executive director of the East Athens Development Corporation.

Trailblazers, in government and beyond

Long after UGA was founded, several notable Athenians shattered racial and sexual barriers — the first Black citizens elected to public office, the first women to climb the ranks of the government and the two Black students that desegregated UGA.

Before Athens and Clarke County became a unified governmental body, Ed Turner and Nancy Denson paved the way for future local politicians. Turner was the first Black Athenian to be elected to Athens City Council and served for 18 years from 1970 to 1988.

Turner attended UGA in the mid 1960’s, quickly becoming influenced by Black empowerment and civil rights leaders like Malcom X and James Baldwin. Around the same time, Black voter registration rates in Athens were on the rise, and locals were scouting for someone in the Black community to run for Athens City Council — little did Turner know, the community had their eyes on him.

At the time, 10 middle-aged white men represented Athens’ five districts. Turner won in a runoff, defeating the two white candidates — including the incumbent. Though the response was overwhelmingly negative, Turner stood his ground on the council; he was often ignored or stonewalled. Despite his struggles, Turner got the ball rolling. A couple of years later, the second Black man was elected and soon after that, the first Black woman.

This year, half of the commission seats are held by people of color for the first time in the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government’s history.



Charlayne Hunter-Gault speaks during the Holmes-Hunter Lecture at the University of Georgia's the Chapel in Athens, Georgia, on Thursday, Feb. 15, 2018. PHOTO/FILE STAFF

Nancy Denson became the first woman on Athens City Council in 1980. Denson, mother of four and running a part-time accounting and alterations business out of her home, had no prior political experience. Still, Denson beat her opponent, four-term incumbent Bryan Craft, in a landslide.

What began as a passion for speaking out against unfair zoning practices in her neighborhood soon led to her becoming president of the neighborhood association — and eventually, going door to door to campaign for the District 5 council seat. Although she was often the subject of sexist comments and the butt of the men’s jokes, Denson was not afraid to disagree — and anger — the councilmen. This attitude got her re-elected three times to the council, a win in the tax commissioner’s office and eventually the title of ACC mayor.

Charlayne Hunter-Gault and Hamilton Holmes were the first Black students admitted to UGA in 1961, effectively desegregating the university and breaking down barriers in public education in Georgia. Both graduated from Henry McNeal Turner High School in Atlanta, Holmes as valedictorian and Hunter as third in the class. Holmes had dreams to become a doctor, Hunter a journalist — they both saw those dreams coming true at UGA. However, their applications were denied, again and again.

In 1960, their legal team filed for an injunction seeking to prohibit UGA from “refusing to consider [Holmes’ and Hunter’s] applications and those of other Negro residents of Georgia for admission to the University.” Their request was initially denied, but a full trial was held later that year. On Jan. 6, 1961, Judge William Bootle issued a ruling, stating that Holmes and Hunter “would have already been admitted had it not been for their race and color,” and they were immediately admitted to UGA. Three days later, they became the first Black students to enroll in classes.

“Oftentimes, the change that we see on campus extends into the community,” Sunta said. “For the community of Athens, what was so important about the two of them and the courage and bravery that they had to attend the university as the first Black students is that it showed Black Athenians that it was possible to receive the same education as white people.”

The community stood strong behind Hamilton and Holmes, according to Sunta. In fact, when Holmes was subjected to threats and feared for his safety, he would stay with one of the sheriff’s deputies.

“It showed that the community was behind these people coming to the University of Georgia and making that kind of stand in order to change the social systems that precluded them from higher education,” Sunta said.

Shaping culture: native musicians

Athens has earned its reputation as one of the South’s most vibrant music towns, where live music spills from nearly every corner. Iconic venues like the Georgia Theatre and 40 Watt Club have become launching pads for rising artists. Much of Athens’ rich musical identity today traces back to the legendary acts of the ’70s and ’80s — bands like R.E.M., the B-52s and Widespread Panic — who put the town on the global stage and transformed the genre of indie rock.

“I do think that Athens had a burgeoning [rock and folk] scene for a very long time,” Sunta said. “But I think that what the B-52’s and R.E.M and then later Widespread Panic did ... it kind of proved that Athens was what we all believed that it was: this town for creatives, for musicians, for artists to come and be in community with each other and kind of find their way here.”

R.E.M. formed in Athens in 1980 when UGA students Michael Stipe and Peter Buck met in Wuxtry Records, bonding over shared musical interest. After teaming up with two more band members, who also attended UGA, they debuted at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church — with no idea that they would eventually sell more than 90 million albums worldwide and shape alternative rock forever.

The B-52’s formed at a local Chinese restaurant in 1976, and played their first show at a Milledge Avenue house party on Valentine’s Day in 1977. The Red & Black watched and covered the band as they made it big — reporting on their first performances at frat houses to hearing them on the radio, describing their sound as strange and eccentric.

Widespread Panic got its start in 1982 when UGA students John Bell, Mike House and Dave Schools formed a band named after Houser’s nickname, “Panic.” In the mid-80s, they began performing at Athens’s Uptown Lounge and soon became known for staying on stage for hours, sometimes up to four.

Sunta attributes this stardom to Athens being an inherently creative town and having so many avenues — such as the Georgia Theater, 40 Watt Club, Flickr Bar, Bouvet and more — for artists to collaborate and showcase their work. These bands gave and continue to give contemporary and future local musicians the motivation to continue with their craft, Sunta said.

“More than anything, there’s a scene here that’s always looking for ... indie rock alternative music, new wave post-punk music,” Sunta said. “Coupled with the fact that Athens is this weird, creative community at its heart, made it a safe space for some of these bands to cultivate their own sound and their own identity.”



The Baseball Project, featuring members of R.E.M. and The Dream Syndicate, plays for a sold-out concert at 40 Watt Club in Athens, Georgia, on Friday, Sept. 12, 2025. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

Who let the Dawgs out?

Uga throughout the years

Ansley Jackson

The Seiler family has raised generations of the University of Georgia's beloved mascot, Uga. This bulldog has quite the history, with 10 bulldogs barking before the current dog, Boom. Here is a brief history of all the mascots that have represented the school.

Uga 0: Before the Seiler Family

During the team's first football season, the mascot was not a bulldog at all, but a goat. The goat made its debut during the Georgia versus Auburn game on Feb. 22, 1892, wearing a black coat with 'U.G' in red letters on either side, a hat and ribbons on its horns.

Trilby, a female bull terrier owned by student Charles H. Black, was the first dog mascot for the team. Trilby, along with her 13 puppies, were considered the first 'sponsors' for Southern football, and inspired the "Bulldog" label that Georgia wears to this day.

Mr. Angel was the final predecessor for Uga. From 1944-1946, he was the first English Bulldog to serve as the UGA mascot.

Uga I, Hood's Ole Dan: 1956-1966

Hood's Ole Dan, the first Uga, was a gift to Cecelia Seiler from a friend, Frank Heard. He made his first appearance during the 1956 home opener against Florida State University. One of Frank Seiler's classmates in law school, William Young, came

up with Uga's name, which is an abbreviation for the University of Georgia.

Uga II, Ole Dan's Uga: 1966-1972

Uga II, the son of Uga I, was introduced during the Homecoming pregame ceremony against Kentucky in 1966. He had a grand entrance, with Charles Seiler leading him down a field lined by the Georgia Redcoat Band.

Ole Dan's Uga had a successful career, watching the team appear in five different bowl games and win two SEC Championships.

Uga III, Seiler's Uga Three: 1972-1980

Seiler's Uga Three had a successful career, leading the team to six bowl games and winning the 1980 NCAA championship. He ended his career on his 100th game, marking the start of the 1981 season.

Uga IV, Seiler's Uga Four: 1981-1989

Seiler's Uga Four was considered the most active of the Georgia mascots, being the only mascot to attend a bowl game every year of his career. He also attended the Heisman Trophy Banquet with Herschel Walker on Dec. 9, 1982, becoming the first mascot to be invited to a Heisman Trophy Banquet.

After being named "Dog of the Decade" by Vince Dooley, he was awarded the Georgia varsity letter, which is the highest honor available to UGA mascots.

Uga V, Uga IV's Magillicuddy II: 1990-1999

Uga IV's Magillicuddy II led Georgia to four NCAA team titles, women's swimming and diving, women's gymnastics, men's tennis and men's golf, and placed second in the Director's Cup race. This is considered Georgia's most successful collective sporting effort in department history at

the time.

Uga V was featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated, where he was declared the nation's best college mascot.

In addition to being a team mascot, he also pursued an acting career, appearing on Clint Eastwood's "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil," which was filmed in his hometown of Savannah, Georgia.

Uga VI, Uga V's Whatchagot Loran: 1999-2008

Uga V's Whatchagot Loran was crowned the winningest mascot in UGA history in 2007, with a record of 87-27. Over the span of his career, he attended 114 games, which is more than any Uga in the mascot's history.

Uga VI is also known as being the heaviest Uga, weighing 65 pounds, which is 20 pounds heavier than his father, Uga V.

Uga VII, Loran's Best: 2008-2009

Loran's Best was introduced during the 2008 season-opener against Georgia Southern. He was known as a laidback mascot, who was not annoyed by flying in airplanes, taking photos with fans or the loud crowds during games.

Uga VII unexpectedly passed away on Nov. 19, 2009, due to heart problems. Georgia did not have a live mascot at the final home game of the 2009 season. Instead, a wreath was placed above Uga VII's dog house, and the players wore a special decal on their helmets in his honor.

Uga VIII, Big Bad Bruce: 2010-2011

Big Bad Bruce was introduced during the Homecoming pregame ceremony against Vanderbilt on Oct. 16, 2010.

Uga VIII was diagnosed with lymphoma and was only able to serve the last six regular season games in the 2010 season. Due to his condition, he had to miss the bowl game against the University of Central Florida.

Uga IX, Russ: 2012-2015

Russ, the half brother of Uga VII, got an upgrade from interim mascot in 2012. During his reign, he won the SEC Eastern Division Championship twice. He was the first substitute mascot since Otto in 1986.

Uga X, Que: 2015-2022

Que made his debut during the game against Georgia Southern on Nov. 21, 2015. He attended every game in 2015 as part of his audition for the Uga title.

Uga X took the crown for winningest Uga, surpassing Uga VI's 87-27 record. He had a record of 91-18 and won back-to-back national championships, as well as two SEC championships.

Uga XI, Boom: 2023-present

Boom stepped into his role as Uga at only 10 months old. He was introduced during the G-Day Game in 2023.

Uga XI has already had a successful career, leading the team to back-to-back SEC championships, and has a record of 36-6. With a few more years, Boom might claim the title of winningest dog.



Georgia mascot "Boom" walks around during a game between Georgia and Alabama at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 27, 2025. PHOTO/ETHAN GREENE



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Freshmen gather on the field of Sanford Stadium “Between the Hedges” during Freshman Welcome on Tuesday, Aug. 12, 2025. PHOTO/CAROLINE NEWBERN

Behind the hedges

A history of Sanford Stadium’s greenery

Andy Mathis

As generations of Bulldog fans would tell you, there’s no line of shrubbery as iconic to sports as the hedges of the University of Georgia’s Sanford Stadium. The Chinese privet bushes that frame Dooley Field have seen every Georgia home game since 1929.

The hedges were removed this February for the third time in Georgia’s history. They were revitalized off-site, including a complete soil replacement, irrigation and drainage work. The hedges were replanted with the same lineage in time for the 2024 G-Day game.

Named after Dr. Steadman Vincent Sanford, a pivotal figure in Bulldog athletics, Sanford Stadium’s roots trace back to the early 20th century. Sanford’s vision was to provide UGA with a football venue that compared to its in-state rival, Georgia Tech.

The catalyst for the stadium’s construction came in 1927 when Georgia suffered a controversial defeat at Grant Field, sparking Sanford’s determination to build a stadium “bigger than Tech.”

To realize his vision, Sanford devised a unique funding strategy, inviting members of the athletic association to sign notes guaranteeing a bank loan for construction in exchange for lifetime seats. The response was overwhelming, and in 1928, construction began on the stadium with a total cost of \$360,000, supported by fans and alumni.

The hedges were introduced in 1926 when a UGA employee

at the Rose Bowl noticed the red rose bushes surrounding the field. In Athens, Sanford had begun constructing what he felt would become the South’s most decorated college football stadium. The employee suggested that rose bushes be planted around the field, and the idea was received well, with one change in mind. Instead, Chinese privet, given to the university by an Atlanta donor, would be planted as a result of Athens’ climate being unsuitable for rose bushes.

In 1929, the university sent the governor’s son and his ROTC instructor to Atlanta to pick up the bushes, as the ROTC truck was the only vehicle in the university fleet large enough for the job. As legend has it, the truck’s headlights went out on the way back, and the ROTC instructor was forced to crawl onto the truck’s hood to light the way, hanging on with one hand and holding a flashlight with the other while the governor’s son drove back to Athens, according to the UGA Alumni Association website.

Once the two arrived at the stadium, workers planted the hedges overnight with mere hours to spare until the game against Yale the next day. The group, however, was successful in getting the hedges planted in time, and as a result, the 1929 Georgia-Yale game was the first played in the newly-dedicated Sanford Stadium and was the largest athletic event ever held in the South at that time. Thirty thousand fans and the governors of nine Southern states were in attendance – a fitting crowd for Georgia’s first victory between the hedges.

At around the same time, one of the biggest controversies in Georgia’s history erupted. Atlanta was selected to host the

1996 Summer Olympics, and Sanford Stadium was chosen as the venue for the soccer matches. Since a regulation soccer field measures approximately 115 yards by 74 yards, the hedges would have to be removed. At the time, former UGA football coach and director of athletics Vince Dooley knew Georgia fans were less than enthralled with the idea.

It was discovered that the hedges, however, were diseased—suffering from an infestation of nematodes, or microscopic worms—justifying their timely removal. Healthy cuttings were nurtured into full-grown hedges and returned to Sanford Stadium, where they were transplanted in a ceremony involving Dooley and other Georgia officials. The result is the current hedges, which Georgia fans lovingly call “Hedges II.”

“They’re the sons and daughters of the original hedges,” Dooley said in a 2009 interview with ESPN.

The familiar box-shaped hedge, 5 feet tall and 5 feet wide, has not only aesthetically framed the Bulldogs’ games for eight decades now but also served a practical purpose.

The hedges and the little-known metal fence embedded within have proved enormously effective at crowd control; only once in the stadium’s history have Georgia fans stormed the field and torn down the goalposts. As a result, many schools around the country have copied the idea, but the Georgia hedges tradition is not transferable.

“[The hedges] are something magical,” Dooley said in the ESPN interview. “One of the great traditions of college football.”

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Building history

How some of Athens’ oldest houses came to be

Madison Linton

Even after one visit to Athens, the unique qualities of the town’s historic buildings are unforgettable. Whether an apartment complex, a restaurant building that frequently rotates names or a designated historic site, these buildings simultaneously provide insight to the past and ideas for the future.

T.R.R. Cobb House

The pink-tinted T.R.R. Cobb House, located on 175 Hill Street, is a large, historic home that has been through several changes, yet remains historic. Over the years, its purpose has evolved. Now it serves as a museum, with staff making an effort to maintain the integrity of the building’s past appearance. The tastes of the Cobb family are reflected in the patterned curtains, blue and gold wallpaper and red and gold carpeting, some styles emulated by modern artists. Period-popular furniture and trinkets from the 1800s take up any space left up to the imagination.

Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, who the house is named for, was born in 1823 in Jefferson County, Georgia, but is considered one of the first citizens of Athens. According to the T.R.R. Cobb House website, Cobb died in 1862 fighting as an officer in the Confederate Army in the Civil War, survived by his wife, children and the family’s 25 slaves.

Cobb’s wife, Marion, lived in the home 11 years following his death. Afterward, the home served as a rental property, fraternity house, and boarding house; the Archdiocese of Atlanta purchased the home in 1962 and the Stone Mountain Memorial Association bought it in 1984 and stayed in its ownership for over 20 years.

In 2004, the house was bought by the Watson-Brown Foundation, saving it from neglect. The home reopened as a museum in 2007.

“They cut the main hallway down the middle. The octagonal rooms each got their own truck, and then certain rooms got their own truck, and the upstairs was taken apart, some board by board, some entire walls,” said museum curator Ashleigh Oatts on the process of moving the home to different locations.

The home is filled with family heirlooms and replicas by local artists, but not everything about the history of this building is charming. While the controversy surrounding Cobb and his family is disturbing, the home has historical value, due to its records and the modern attempts to emulate the old look.

Oatts explains the history of the Cobb home and the happenings at the house today, including the efforts to preserve the space and to tell the stories that need to be told.

“In 2021 [the museum] purchased a plantation log book that was written in by John B. Lamar,” Oatts said. “John B. Lamar managed the plantations for himself and for his sister. That book contains the names of all of the enslaved people at that point, or at those seven plantations, so we’ve been turning that into a database of all the enslaved people, including the names of the people who were enslaved here.” Once the names are in the book, the house will go back and check to see if they missed anyone from the Cobb family letters.

Taylor-Grady House

In 1844, the Taylor-Grady House was built by cotton merchant and planter General Robert Taylor as a summer residence, later bought by William S. Grady and lived in by his son Henry W. Grady for a brief period in the 1860s.

“A lot of people have never been in this house. They do not realize that it is open to the public by appointment, it still belongs to the city-county government, and it was restored by the Athens Junior assembly, now Junior League, and they ran it for over 50 years. It was on the brink of disappearing from the local scene,” said Charlotte Thomas, a historical researcher who has been studying the home since the 1970s. Along with Thomas, Lee Epting, owner of Epting Events, has conducted research on the house. Epting prevented the home from being vacated and is on the board of the home, fascinated by its complex history.

Henry W. Grady, a writer for the Atlanta Daily Herald who

coined the term “The New South,” encouraged industrial development as an answer to the country’s economic struggles. He was the managing editor for the Atlanta Constitution and had beliefs about the post-Civil War South that endorsed white supremacy.

“We want people to get involved,” said Epting. “We want them to come ask questions. We want them to have the guts to step into the past and learn from that.”

Like the T.R.R. Cobb house, the Taylor-Grady House has a tragic past.

“The whole point now is to tell the entire story of all the different people who have lived here and the times that they lived through,” said Thomas. “See this house, not only was Antebellum and Civil War, but then you coast along a few years towards through reconstruction, and then you get to the Spanish American War, and this house was affected by it, and then a little bit later World War I and World War II.”

The involvement of this home in many notable historical events has led the staff to prioritize teaching the history, rather than ignoring it. Most of the items in the house can be touched by visitors, with exception to furnishings and items with more importance, such as William Crawford’s chair upstairs.

The house features 13 columns in front, intended to represent the 13 colonies. Inside, you can see the original ceiling moldings, a painting of Henry Grady’s daughter when she was presented at Queen Victoria’s court in England and period appropriate furnishings given by many.

The Hill, Donald-Epting House

Epting has helped save not only the Taylor-Grady House but also the Donald-Epting House, located on The Hill. Not only did Epting step in to prevent the Taylor-Grady House from being cleared out, he is heavily involved with The Hill, a picturesque event location tucked away in trees.

“We want them to come ask questions. We want them to have the guts to step into the past and learn from that.”

LEE EPTING | OWNER OF EPTING EVENTS

Epting holds wedding events there in the Hodgson-Lumpkin House, as well as the Donald-Epting House.

“We found [the Donald-Epting house] and we jacked it up, moved it over here from South Carolina in 1979, because it was falling apart and was going just dilapidated,” said Epting, who added a small house to the back of the original one.

The Donald-Epting House was moved from Donalds, South Carolina, originally owned by John Donald, who purchased it around 1810. Originally a two-story log house, the home has had multiple additions since Epting took over. Today, the home has modern kitchenware, a gas chandelier from the 1840s that was taken from the Phi Mu house, and needlework from Mary Ann Lamar Cobb. Period antiques make up the whole house. Today, the home often holds formal events and is lived in.

“Somebody offered me a lot of money when I was first out here to buy the land, and because they could put 100 houses on this land,” Epting said. “I said, there is not enough money in the world that you could buy my house with, I mean, what more could I want out of life than what I’ve got? I’ve got 200 years of history. It’s a fun, interesting place. I’ve got land, I’ve got birds, I got trees, I’ve got too damn many deer and squirrels.”

Despite modern renovations, writings remain on the wall from the previous residents.

“It says John Smith slept here from June to July of 1821,” said Epting on the writings, which were done with lead.

In addition, not everything about the home has been renovated, with the doors having small cracks in them. Epting does not mind, though, as he prefers letting the house “breathe.”

“Cleaning it? Yeah, it’s hell,” said Epting.



The Taylor-Grady House pictured on Sunday, June 29, 2025, in Athens, Georgia. PHOTO/FOREST X. DYNES

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The University of Georgia’s Arch in Athens, Georgia pictured on Friday, April 24, 2026. PHOTO/THADDEE BARGE

Culture and community in the Classic City

Past the Arch, experience Athens

Caroline Newbern

Four years ago, I arrived in Athens without knowing much about the town or myself. I knew it was where my mom went to school and that it was emblematic of the “classic college town.” I could never have anticipated its central role in my academic, civic and personal development.

To start with the expected: academics. Enrolled at the University of Georgia, “the birthplace of higher education,” I assumed a high degree of intellectual rigor and responsibility. My freshman year, I was focused on little else besides class-work. Yes, while the work and grades are important, but in retrospect, it is what happened outside of the classroom and beyond assignments that led me to a larger sense of purpose. Through business profiles, feature stories, taste tests, photo essays and more, I discovered more one story and one person at a time. As part of my degree in journalism, it was impossible to get a passing grade without becoming knowledgeable about the Athens community, which leads me to my second point: civic engagement.

From my earlier years at UGA doing volunteer work at Brooklyn Cemetery and the Athens Area Humane Society, to my later, coverage-focused events like downtown protests and

polling events, I speak from experience when I say you learn more about the community and its people when you invest in what they care about.

In trying to give back and learn as much as possible, I have felt more attuned to the heart of the Classic City: care. Whether student or resident, each person I’ve met in this town is passionate about something. This isn’t a particularly unique claim as it figures that most people in general care about one thing or another. But, different from my bustling hometown of metropolitan Atlanta, Athenians are more than willing to sit down and have an honest, vulnerable conversation about the things that matter to them.

But then, there are the parts of Athens I will miss most that are harder to give directionality toward.

The feeling of walking through North Campus on a sunny, yet breezy day, watching the squirrels run across the lawn and fellow students studying outside of Main Library.

The crowd of people young and old that flood the streets of downtown every year for Wild Rumpus, costumed to the nines while parading, smiling all the way.

“Milledge walks” or runs with friends during the holiday season, looking at the Christmas lights strung on the sorority and fraternity houses, decorated also by green wreaths and

red bows. A necessary trip to Cali N Tito’s or The Farm Cart every time my mom would visit.

My daily walk from my apartment, down the ridiculously steep Baxter Street hill, through the Tate Student Center, and to the journalism building, all the while passing friends, recognized and called by name.

These are personal but not individual experiences. That is to say, you can seek out these opportunities if you choose and will likely be presented with some of them during your time in Athens. But it’s also likely that you may not have the same appreciation for them as I do, and that’s okay.

As I once did, you may think that there is a particular type of person who “belongs” in a college town like this one and who can enjoy being here. Also, like me, I hope you discover just how wrong this idea is. I firmly believe that there is something for everyone who visits the Classic City. It may take time and effort, but all the good things do.

And, if you need any ideas on where to start, we’ve got your back.

Caroline Newbern is a master’s journalism student at UGA.

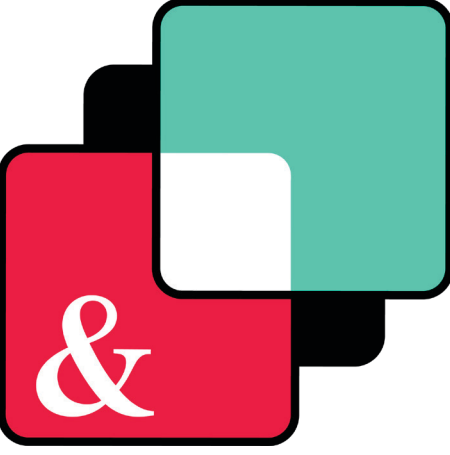


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59					60					61			

ACROSS

1. Pantry container

4. “By yesterday!”

8. Kind of sax

12. “I see!”

13. Partake at a feast

14. Combine, as resources

15. Anti-prohibitionist

16. Intensified

18. Common sense?

20. Wine adjective

21. Takes one’s pick

24. More than just ache

28. Pencil filler

32. Capital of France?

33. Flock member

34. Desktop pictures

36. Highland boy

37. Non-alkali

39. Ferociously

41. Journalists, collectively

43. Proof goof

44. Club appearance

46. Hunt illegally

50. Praiseworthy

55. Pride partner

56. Debatable, as a point

57. Grandstand section

58. Matterhorn, for one

59. Chapel fixtures

60. Many millennia

61. Abbr. on a road map

DOWN

1. Benchley classic

2. “Could I interrupt?”

3. Figure of interest?

4. Long Island university

5. Bro’s sibling, maybe

6. Mandela’s org.

7. Child’s ammo

8. Certain helicopter

9. Filming locale

10. It tests the water

11. Worn out

17. Court call

19. Take a bough?

22. Little spasms

23. Brown ermine

25. Referee’s guideline

26. Administered with a spoon, say

27. Soul mate

28. Dieter’s measure

29. Heat, at times

30. In the center of

31. A deadly sin

35. Military trench diggers

38. You can count on them

40. Baby syllable

42. Make known

45. Golden ____ Bridge

47. A bit cracked

48. Revolver innovator

49. Hoopla

50. Band aid

51. Forest female

52. Do some yard work

53. Life story, in brief

54. Novelist Deighton

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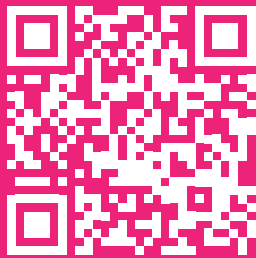
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Her name is Jill

The woman behind
Margo Metaphysical

Caroline Newbern

“Margo!”

From hearing the name inside the store to being called out while on errands and in grocery stores, Jill Furman, owner and operator of Margo Metaphysical, is commonly and incorrectly referred to as “Margo.” But she doesn’t mind, it just means they met her on a whim while she was working.

After sleeping in, at 10:30 a.m., Furman arrives at her storefront on Clayton Street with her 2-year-old golden retriever, Luna. Paperwork, bills, emails and around 11 a.m., helping customers whether they’re looking for something in particular or just wanting to chat.

Since 2002, Margo Metaphysical has served the community in downtown Athens, Georgia, and beyond.

From the 305 to the 706

Furman hasn’t always lived in Athens; in fact, it wasn’t until after having her children and wanting to raise them in “a calmer, less materialistic, less cutthroat environment” that she considered moving away from Miami, Florida. So, she made a list of college towns, visiting each one and settling on Athens.

After moving to the Classic City, she also pivoted in her career, going from a teacher to all-in on a wholesale amber business she previously started with her husband called Amber Dreams. Part of the job involved attending gem and mineral shows and meeting dealers. From Africans selling Congolese statues and malachite to Pakistanis selling onyx, Furman was impassioned by the interactions.

“I was like, wait a minute, this is what I want to be doing,” Furman recalled.

With a storefront for Amber Dreams across from Mellow Mushroom, everything was set in motion and only picked up speed when the Clayton Street spot went up for lease.

“I can’t let this spot go,” Furman thought.

A manager in each spot, Furman ran between each store, Amber Dreams and Margo Metaphysical, named after a combination of her daughters’ names, Maya and Arielle. A few years later, as a result of a divorce from her husband, he kept Amber Dreams and Furman put all of her focus into Margo Metaphysical.

“[I thought,] if I can have it in my control, it can be great,’ so the store has prospered. We don’t make a lot of money, but we serve a lot of people in the community, and we’re slow and steady,” Furman said.

As a result of this prosperity, she was able to buy the building in 2023, “and the store is paying for itself.”

More than just crystals

“Crystals, books, journals. I mean, this is just me with or without owning the store. I’m an old hippie.”

Since she was a little girl, going gemstone mining and picking up rocks and crystals and filling her pockets with them when she went on hikes, Furman remembers having an interest in the metaphysical, also referred to as “woo woo stuff.”

“I was always like the one who, “Oh, I don’t need a pillow and a blanket to go hiking. I need room in my backpack for whatever we find along the way,” Furman said.

This love for traveling carries over into the careful curation of Margo Metaphysical. There are hand-picked lamps from Istanbul, moldavite from Czechoslovakia and papyrus from Egypt.

“I have to see it. I have to feel the energy,” Furman said.

She plans for six trips a year, three trips and three gem and mineral shows, like the anticipated May show in Franklin, North Carolina. After “filling the car,” she drives back.

Despite the consideration of “woo woo energy” or other conservatism toward the metaphysical, Furman treats the stones, crystals, journals, sound and energy healing sessions as tools.

“You know, if somebody is going to be more confident by having Tiger’s Eye, which says it makes you more confident, why would we not accept that confidence?”

“We do not replace doctors, we do not replace therapists, but we’re here to give an ear for whatever is ailing people... but the stones, the journals, the tools, they’re all self help tools, give love to thyself,” Furman said.

A stone from outer space

“The most conservative people that aren’t into crystals at all will come in here and buy a beautiful bracelet or a beautiful ring. But a lot of times I get people to feel this,” Furman said.

On the counter, Furman placed a stand of three small pieces of moldavite, a green formed from melted rock ejected into the atmosphere an estimated 15 million years ago by a meteorite.

“It’s a very energetic stone from Czechoslovakia. A lot of people who’ve never felt energy and stones will feel something,” Furman said.



Jill Furman and her dog Luna pose for a portrait inside Margo Metaphysical located on Clayton Street, in Athens, Georgia, on April 7, 2026.
PHOTO/CAROLINE NEWBERN

“You know, if somebody is going to be more confident by having Tiger’s Eye, which says it makes you more confident, why would we not accept that confidence?”

JILL FURMAN | OWNER OF MARGO METAPHYSICAL

Moldavite, considered to be an “extremely transformational stone,” can cause a sensation of heat, tingling or pulsing. And while not everyone feels it, others may feel too much and experience a sense of anxiety. Most feel calm and peaceful, in addition to productive energy that goes into their day.

She recalled touching it when she was younger; before-

hand, she aligned with the conservatism, anti-“woo woo,” thought that people were making things up.

“Until I felt that stone. And then I’m like, ‘Wait, there’s something to this.’ And then I started opening my mind to it,” Furman said.

“And if it’s 10% true and 90% what we do with thinking it’s true? I’ll take that.”

Community care

In addition to its metaphysical offerings, Furman is focused on giving back to the community.

“The art we go by [is] a Buddhist philosophy of doing at least three kind things a day...the more you give, the more you get back, spiritually, emotionally and financially,” she said.

Whether that be lending an ear or donating to various causes, Furman, straying from materialism and preferring company over presents, exemplifies this principle; while the store runs itself, Furman has refused a salary for about three years.

“I’d rather give away everything I can,” she said.

Luna also helps out where she can as an “emotional support shop dog.”

“People come in here with angst and anxiety and difficulties and just fears or whatever is going on with them, they’ll end up on the floor in an embrace with her,” Furman said.



An array of crystals and gemstones inside Margo Metaphysical located on Clayton Street, in Athens, Georgia, on April 7, 2026. PHOTO/CAROLINE NEWBERN

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What to know

Your guide on the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government

Hogan Rigole

As a new school year begins at the University of Georgia, it is important for students to be familiar with their elected officials. As a resident of Athens-Clarke County, students are affected by the local government, have a say in local politics and have a civic duty to the community. Here is more information about the city’s main government leaders and their impact.

Mayor

Dexter Fisher is the new mayor of Athens-Clarke County. He is in his first term as mayor after being elected on June 16, making history as the first Black mayor of Athens. As mayor, Fisher heads the Athens-Clarke County Mayor and Commission board, which is the main governing body of the county. The primary responsibilities of the mayor are to set the agenda for commission meetings and to recommend candidates for county positions of manager, attorney, Municipal Court and internal auditor. The mayor also presents the budget for the city and provides a tie-breaking vote on the commission.

Fisher believes in Athens’ bright future. Originally moving from South Carolina to attend Piedmont College for his master’s degree and remaining in the area ever since, Fisher has deep roots in Athens. Fisher announced his bid for Athens-Clarke County mayor last year on

promises of improved public safety, youth development, workforce readiness, fiscal responsibility and collaborative governance.

Fisher previously represented District 5 and served as mayor pro tempore on the ACC Commission with over four decades of public service experience, including former roles as the director of facilities management at the University of Georgia and chief of district services for the Clarke County School District.

Commission

The commission is composed of ten members from the various districts in Athens-Clarke County. The mayor and commission are the main legislative body and have the responsibilities of enacting city ordinances, appropriating funds for the unified government and setting policy direction for the city manager to implement.

Allison Wright is the District 4 commissioner for Athens-Clarke County. The district covers downtown and a majority of the UGA campus, which are the most visited places in town. Wright has been commissioner for 13 years and previously served on the Clarke County School District Board of Education for eight years.

“Your real duties are making policy so that we’re good stewards of the community’s resources, land, facilities, budget, public safety is a huge part of it, employment,” Wright said. “We’re policy makers, then the manager and his staff, their role is to make it happen. So we’re the what, they’re the how.”

The mayor and commission meets annually with the UGA Student Government Association to discuss policy issues and how students and the local government can work together. The mayor and commission meetings take place at City Hall on the first Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. and are open to the public, with time for the public to make comments. Each commissioner’s bio and contact information can be found on the ACCGov website and each commission meeting is livestreamed.

Manager

The manager is the chief executive officer of Athens-Clarke County and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the city. These responsibilities include implementing policy decisions and making recommendations to the mayor and commission, overseeing daily operations, preparing budgets and hiring department heads.

The manager oversees 24 main departments, divisions and offices of Athens-Clarke County. The role is meant to fulfill the mission of Athens-Clarke County and to ensure staff of the unified government effectively perform all of their responsibilities.

SPLOST

The Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax is a portion of sales tax that allows the local government to fund city improvement projects that would usually be paid for by the general fund and property tax revenues. In Athens-Clarke County, SPLOST is funded by 1% percent of all sales and purchases, without increasing the sales tax. This eases the burden that would otherwise be placed by an increase in taxes.

The 2020 period for SPLOST saw funds go towards facilities management modernization, affordable housing projects, the Classic Center Arena, improvements to the city’s parks, replacement of firehouses and sustainability, such as renewable energy, environmental restoration and green space acquisitions

TSPLOST, a type of SPLOST, goes toward transportation purposes such as roads, public transportation, buses, railways and other infrastructure.

How students can get involved

Mayor and commission meetings are open to the public and are an opportunity for UGA students to attend and learn more about the functioning and processes of the local government. Students can also get in touch with their elected officials, whose information is provided on the ACCGov website. And lastly, students can register to vote in Athens-Clarke County so that their voice can be heard in local government.

Students should also keep an eye out for the city’s social media and website for any updates that may impact them and to stay up to date with the government’s happenings.

The UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government has the Vinson Fellows Program, which is an experiential learning opportunity for undergraduate students who are interested in local and state government. Students have the chance to receive mentorships, training, applied research and technical assistance programs for state and local governments in Georgia.

The International City/Council Management Association (ICMA) Student Chapter at UGA introduces and integrates students into local government and familiarizes them with ICMA, which is one of the leading organizations that represents local government professionals on a nationwide level.

The local government is the most impactful level of government in day-to-day life. Citizens have the most say locally and the effects are far more obvious and immediate than state or federal decisions. From college students to long-time residents of Athens, it is important to stay aware and involved to ensure that your voice is heard.



City Hall in downtown, Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025. PHOTO/CAROLINE NEWBERN



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Bridging borders and cultivating community

How Sharina Maíllo-Pozo teaches and learns with compassion



Sharina Maíllo-Pozo poses for a portrait at the University of Georgia's Founders Memorial Garden in Athens, Georgia, on April 21, 2026. PHOTO/MCKENNA EDWARDS

McKenna Edwards

Sharina Maíllo-Pozo recalls being a pair of many eyes looking up to her mother in her classroom at Colegio San Juan when she was just 6 years old. Maíllo-Pozo says her mother created a space where everyone felt loved and was surrounded by love.

This moment is what instilled her own passion for teaching. “This is something she created,” Maíllo-Pozo said. “I think we have an opportunity every time we enter a classroom to reshape the energy of every space. At times, it takes more work. At times, it doesn't fully happen as you expected, but I feel I have an opportunity to create spaces of knowledge and love every semester, and that, to me, is a gift. I knew back then that I wanted to do something similar.”

While her love for her mother runs deep, her grandmother also holds a large place in her heart. She remembers her with a smile on her face, even keeping a photo of her and her dog framed on her office desk.

Maíllo-Pozo's grandmother reminded her of what a strong, resilient woman looked like. Waking up every morning at 4:45 a.m. to get ready and go to work, never complaining once.

“She always taught me, ‘Whatever job you do, you do it well, no matter what it is, and you do it because you want to do it,’” she said. “She was a huge example of love, I know that a big foundation of who I am, I owe to her.”

Maíllo-Pozo's mother's original plan was for her to become a lawyer; she, however, knew teaching was something she felt passionate about and says this love for teaching is an innate part of herself, her grandmother and mother instilling this love and passion within her.

“I always learn a big lesson from the new generations, and this generation is teaching me to embrace also the good things I have done.”

SHARINA MAÍLLO-POZO | ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT UGA

Learning from each other

When speaking about her students, Maíllo-Pozo is full of genuine happiness, a smile gracing her features. She leads conversations in her class with ease, and students take control of the overall flow of the day.

Latinx in the United States, or Spanish 4030, she notes, is a course where she has learned from her students as much as they learn from her.

“[This class] has shaped me into a different scholar, a class where my next project came about to be,” Maíllo-Pozo said. “My next project is coming of age Latinx in Georgia and New York, so the experiences I got in these classes motivated me to see that there's ways to [reconcile] once again and bridge these two worlds, where I came of age in New York to be an adult woman, but I also came of age here in Georgia as a professional, as many other things.”

To anyone entering her classroom, it is evident she cares and is cared for by these students. She attends to each student with care and precision. Listening closely to everything her students say as they speak and share their thoughts.

“She cares deeply for every single one of her students, and it shows.” Ethan Cone, senior Spanish and communication sciences and disorders student, said. “She is so extremely insightful and creative. I'm just astounded by her. She brightens my day every time I see her.”

Cone graduated in May 2026 and took Spanish 4030 with Maíllo-Pozo in the spring. He went on to say he has never felt genuinely cared for as a human being by a professor more than her.

Decorating the majority of her office walls in Gilbert Hall are thank-you cards from previous students and others who have been impacted by Maíllo-Pozo.

“[My] students remind me, at times, that I have to talk about the good, because I guess in my generation, we see it as unnatural and probably self-promotional, if that,” she said.

“I always learn a big lesson from the new generations, and this generation is teaching me to embrace also the good things I have done.”

From NYC to ATH

In 2018, Maíllo-Pozo started her journey at the University of Georgia on the tenure track as an assistant professor in Latinx studies and Spanish. Before her start at UGA, she served as an assistant professor at the State University of New York at New Paltz, teaching various courses on Spanish and Latin culture.

“I still miss home, New York,” Maíllo-Pozo said. “People always ask me, because I'm [a] Dominican Republican in New

York, ‘Where are you from?’ and I always say, New York. I noticed that's my very first instinct to say, New York. New York will always be home in many ways, but I have found a way to make Athens kind of home.”

In Athens, through her time at UGA, she recalls many of her colleagues who have mentored her and are important to her, Dana Bultman being one. Bultman, head of the romance languages department, was a part of the committee who brought Maíllo-Pozo to UGA originally.

“She's a role model in many ways,” Maíllo-Pozo said.

No matter where she is, Maíllo-Pozo has always found community. She notes there are many intersections and challenges in finding community in different places.

“Community creation has been there, like an impetus not only on my end, but of people who have similar interests, who are like me or who are also migrants like me, to want to kind of gravitate towards each other,” Maíllo-Pozo said.

“I had that in New York. My best friends are Ecuadorian, Argentinian, Puerto Rican and we all became amazing friends.”

These intersections and challenges are a driving force in Maíllo-Pozo's research, challenges that immigrants face when coming of age in different areas of the United States.

Specifically, Maíllo-Pozo is beginning to look at the intersection of art between Latin cultures in New York and Georgia, and how these two different experiences begin to bridge together.



Sharina Maíllo-Pozo listens to students in her class talk about their personal experiences during her Spanish 4030 class Latinx in the United State at UGA in Athens, Georgia, on April 22, 2026. PHOTO/MCKENNA EDWARDS

“Bridging Sonic Borders”

In May of 2025, Maíllo-Pozo's book, “Bridging Sonic Borders. Popular Music in Contemporary Dominican/Dominicanayork Literature,” was published by the University of Texas Press.

Her book explores the intersection of music and identity of a Dominican's migratory movement to the United States. This idea came organically, Maíllo-Pozo said. Her mother was a literature teacher, and she has been reading for as long as she can remember.

This April, Maíllo-Pozo attended the LatinxConnect Conference, held by the University of Pittsburgh, where she spoke about her book and spoke about how she and others attending see hope in their projects with Latin-based studies.

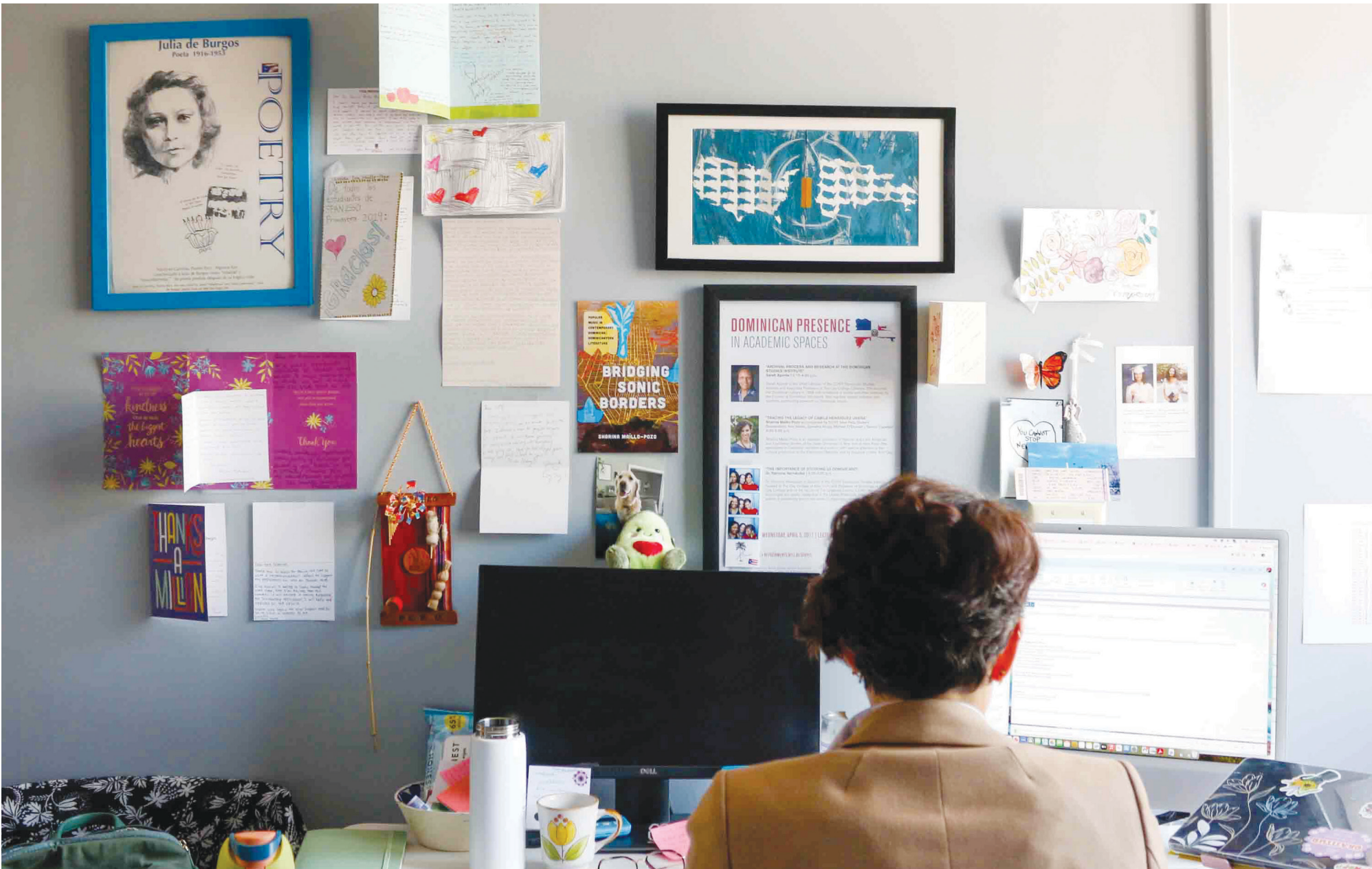
One of the questions she remembers thinking about was the impact she knows her book has had, although she didn't expect it. From academics who have read her book, to those not in the academic field and may not know much about music and literature.

“The takeaway that I hoped to get was when they read these, some of their memories will bring them back to their very own sonic memories and that of their families,” Maíllo-Pozo said. “And that was one big win that I had.”

Tears begin forming in her eyes as she recalls one moment in particular from the conference. Maíllo-Pozo recalls a young woman saying, during her book conversation, as if she was finally able to connect with her father and enter his world after reading Maíllo-Pozo's literary analysis of a character called Papi, who connects with his own daughter through music.

The scene follows the father and daughter sitting at their breakfast table, listening to music, eating and connecting.

“To me, that was the huge win,” Maíllo-Pozo said. “Like, if someone was to tell me, ‘What was the win?’ that was the win. Because that was part of what precisely I kind of felt. The book was very healing to me in many ways, too, as a human.”



Sharina Maíllo-Pozo surrounded by her work and thank you notes from students and others in her office in Gilbert Hall at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, on April 22, 2026. PHOTO/MCKENNA EDWARDS

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ADD Drug • \$

Athens Discount Drug, located on South Lumpkin Street opened in 1961, and both the pharmacy and old-fashioned lunch counter are both still serving patrons today. Swing by in the morning or early afternoon for breakfast, sandwiches, burgers, hot dogs, milkshakes and more.

Cali N Tito's • \$-\$\$\$

The Five Points location is close to campus with patio seating and a BYOB policy, while the larger East Side location has a full bar, gelato counter and arcade games. Both spots are beloved by locals, students and families alike, have great atmospheres and some of the best food in town. Favorites include the empanadas, tostones and maduros.



The Globe's Classic Reuben sandwich in Athens, Georgia in 2023.

PHOTO/FILE STAFF

Little Italy • \$

Regularly open until 2 a.m., Little Italy has been serving thick and thin crust pizza to Athens' late-night diners since 1997. Calzones, Italian subs and stromboli are also available.

The Grill • \$-\$\$\$

The downtown diner first opened its doors in 1981 and re-opened in 2023, after pandemic closures. Dine on burgers, hand-cut fries, malts and milkshakes among vintage memorabilia and the iconic red neon lights.

Strickland's Restaurant • \$

Opened on Broad Street in 1960, the family-owned restaurant eventually settled on Atlanta Highway in 1995. Specializing in southern dishes like ribs, catfish and green beans, Strickland's is open for breakfast, lunch and all your catering needs, with a rotating menu of specials that changes daily.

Last Resort Grill • \$\$-\$\$\$\$

Founded as a music venue in 1966, Last Resort hosted acts like Jimmy Buffett and Gamble Rogers before it started serv-

ing its signature Southern fare. Steaks, cornbread crusted trout and crab cakes are all on offer, but don't leave without a slice of white chocolate cheesecake.

Big City Bread Cafe • \$-\$\$\$

This cafe is open for breakfast, lunch and Friday night dinner. There's burgers, sandwiches, salads and baked goods to enjoy in the spacious dining area or on the shaded patio.

The Globe • \$-\$\$\$

Traditional pub menu items like fish and chips are complemented by vegetarian options like elote corn ribs and a hummus plate. The selection of whiskeys has been a hallmark since it opened in 1989.

Trappeze Pub • \$\$-\$\$\$\$

Famous for its large craft and imported beer selection, this pub at the corner of North Hull and West Washington streets serves superior bar fare, catering to carnivores with dishes like the Double Pig (braised pork plus bacon), with plant-based options like the Veggie Reuben. Don't forget to try the signature raspberry ketchup.



Veggie tacos and maduros from Cali N Tito's in Athens, Georgia in 2024. PHOTO/FILE STAFF

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TO VIEW MENU

Highlights from iconic annual Athens events



Attendees pose for a photo during the 17th annual Wild Rumpus Halloween Parade & Spectacle in downtown Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Oct. 25, 2025. The event features a parade of people dressed in Halloween costumes, followed by a night of music and entertainment. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM



Southam, an indie band, performs during the 7th annual Historic Athens Porchfest in Athens, Georgia, on Sunday, Oct. 19, 2025. Porchfest features musical performances spread across seven historic neighborhoods. PHOTO/EMILY LAYCOCK



Foster Tyler Elrod rests after crossing the finish line at the AthHalf half marathon in Athens, Georgia, on Sunday, Oct. 12, 2025. The AthHalf is a fundraiser for AthFest Educates, which awards grants to schools, nonprofits and government agencies. PHOTO/EMILY LAYCOCK



Juan Ochoa, a bassist for Karma Kat, performs beside his group at the Wicked Weed Main Stage during day two of the 2026 AthFest Music and Arts Festival in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, June 27, 2026. PHOTO/YOUSIF AL-DULAIMI



Participants in the Women's Pro Twilight Criterium race during the 46th annual The Athens Twilight Criterium, in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, April 18, 2026. The women's race preceded the men's professional race, capping off two days of festivities and other races surrounding the main event. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM



Attendees dance in the rain and listen to the music during day two of the 2026 AthFest Music and Arts Festival in downtown Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, June 27, 2026. The festival features outdoor stages with live music performances, an artisan market, a free Gospel Stage that benefits youth music and arts programs, KidsFest and more. PHOTO/HANNAROSE SCHIANO

Soundtrack of steps

A brief history of the Athens Music Walk of Fame

Kaitlyn Harvey

In downtown Athens, sidewalks shimmer with bronze guitar picks engraved with names — some familiar, others lesser-known. Rock stars, rappers, performers and pioneers alike are commemorated on the Athens Music Walk of Fame, where the city’s rich musical history rests just below our feet.

The walk of fame was installed in 2020 with 10 initial inductees. Since then, 25 more names have been added.

Most recently in 2026, Mary Frances Early, Elite tha Showstoppa, Hugh Hodgson, The Jesters and Wuxtry Records were inducted.

Spanning two blocks between Lumpkin and Pulaski streets, the walk passes historic venues including the Morton Theatre, 40 Watt Club and Georgia Theatre. Notable honorees include artists such as The B-52’s, R.E.M. and Widespread Panic, along with institutions like Nuçi’s Space and 40 Watt Club.

Among the existing 35 inductees is Love Tractor, a local alternative rock band from the 1980s that helped shape the foundation of Athens’ alternative music scene. Members of the group include Mark Cline, Mike Richmond and bassist Armistead Wellford, who are all University of Georgia Alumni.

“Being on the Walk of Fame is great,” said Mark Cline, founder of Love Tractor, in a previous interview with The Red & Black. “It’s like seeing family. I feel like it was our generation of bands that put Athens on the map... It’s really raw. It’s really real. And it’s really Athens.”

The Walk of Fame project is funded by the Athens Cultural Affairs Commission and supported by several community organizations, including the Athens Downtown Development Authority, the Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Arts Division and the Athens-Clarke County Transportation and Public Works Streets & Drainage Division.

“I guess it’s all inspired by the Hollywood Walk of Fame, to celebrate the music scene and people who have contributed in other ways,” Nathaniel Mitchell, a longtime Athens resident and early member of the Walk of Fame Committee, said.

Mitchell, who has lived in Athens since 2006, is a longtime employee at Wuxtry Records, a music promoter, DJ and committee member since the walk’s inception.

“It’s like seeing family. I feel like it was our generation of bands that put Athens on the map...It’s really raw. It’s really. It’s really Athens.”

MARK CLINE | FOUNDER OF LOVE TRACTOR

Each year, the committee reconvenes to narrow the nominations down to five significant spaces, bands or artists. Members are selected by Athens-Clarke County Mayor. The 2026 committee includes Mitchell, David Barbe, Alyssa De-Hayes, Hope Iglehart, Montu Miller and Mark Mobley. When the first selection process began in 2020, about 50 people with



Robert Baine, 30, pavement management crew leader with the Athens-Clarke County department of public works, smooths out concrete around the B-52s Music Walk of Fame plaque on Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2020, in downtown Athens, Georgia. The Music Walk of Fame showcases famous Athens bands with plaques shaped like guitar picks. PHOTO/FILE STAFF

backgrounds in the local music scene were invited to a meeting at the Lyndon House Arts Center, with around 15 people coming to the first meeting.

“I thought a lot more people would be involved with the committee. But after the first round, only half of the people came back,” Mitchell said. “It’s easier to make a decision with seven people than with 25 or more.”

Current selection criteria include contribution to Athens’ identity, representation of diversity and culture, career longevity, musical style and historical significance. Many nominees are considered multiple times and may be eligible for induction across several years.

The walk not only honors individuals, but creative spaces can also earn a plaque. That idea emerged after the passing of Nuçi’s Space founder Linda Phillips. In her memory, a plaque was added to the walk in 2021 to commemorate both her legacy and the space she built.

“It’s about the person’s connection to Athens,” Mitchell said. “Not necessarily does everybody need to be born and raised here, but it’s about how closely they’re associated with

the city and the music scene.”

The bronze plaques were designed by Allen Sutton, a local artist and senior graphic designer at the University of Georgia. His design was selected through a public call for proposals.

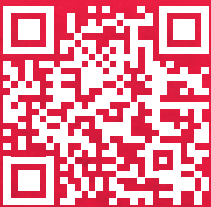
“My hope is that some of these people that might have slipped through the cracks, people will listen to their music,” Sutton said in a previous interview with The Red & Black. “I just put together a nice design, but without them being famous in the first place, there wouldn’t have been a vehicle for it.”

While the walk currently highlights musical contributions from the 1970s onward, Mitchell said the committee intends to recognize earlier eras of Athenian music in future selections.

“With Athens’ music scene, it’s probably easy to focus on a specific era, like the 1970s or 1980s,” Mitchell said. “But, one of the goals is to put all of the names that contributed. Those might be names that people need to look up and find out the historical significance.”

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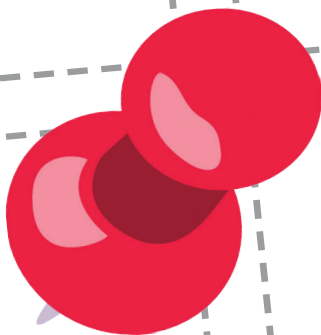
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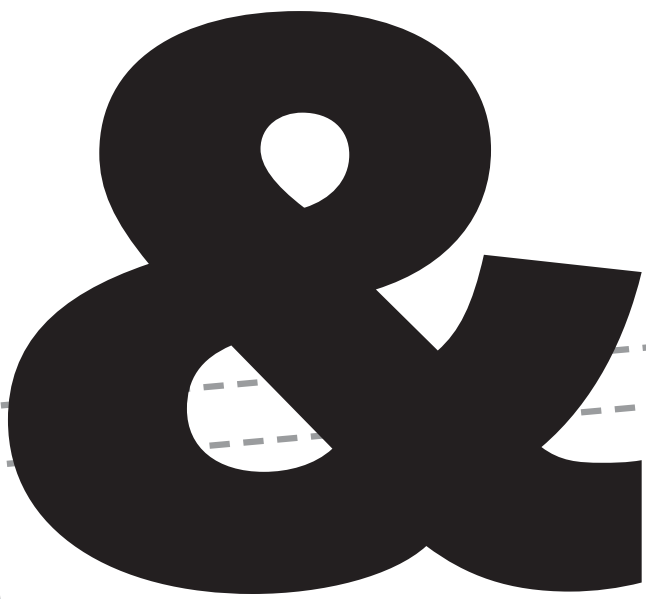
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