



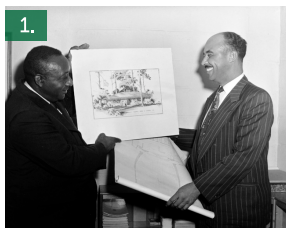
Emery Carter Thomas Auditorium at Dublin 4-H Center (ca. 1957)

Construction of the world's largest 4-H center in Eatonton, Georgia monopolized most of the attention of Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service from 1948 until its dedication on October 30, 1954. Meanwhile, accommodations at Dublin 4-H Center limited the number of students who could attend camps, district meetings, and state competitions within a growing membership in black 4-H Clubs. In 1953, P.H. Stone, State Agent for Negro Extension Work, announced a capital campaign to raise funds to expand lodging facilities from 200 to 500 guests.

R.E. Martin and E.D. Martin, Jr., of Martin Theatres of Georgia, Inc., donated 140 acres to expand the campus. R.E. Martin stated, "Anything that is done to benefit and assist the youth of our state will pay immeasurable dividends in future years, and we feel that no adult can afford to be unmindful of this definite challenge and responsibility that belongs to each of us."

Georgia Governor Herman Talmadge and subsequent Governor Marvin Griffin matched every dollar raised for the Dublin 4-H Center from the Governor's contingency funds. At the onset of the campaign, 4-H Club members pledged \$10,000, enough to build one cabin. Each meeting at Dublin 4-H Center began with a county roll-call to report for fundraising efforts. Bibb, Brooks, and Lowndes counties each raised \$5,000. When their funds were matched by the State of Georgia, these counties earned naming rights for three cabins.

P.H. Stone moved to Washington, D.C. in 1955 to work as administrative assistant in the Federal Extension Office of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). He returned for the dedication of the Mills Bee Lane Foundation cottage and a pool funded by Mrs. Parker B. Poe. Stone stated at that time, "We knew if we started to do something ourselves, people would help us."



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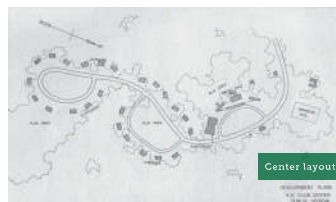
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1. Alexander Hurse, left, and Gus Hill, right, reviewed sketches of cabins designed by Cooper, Barrett, Skinner, Woodbury & Cooper, Inc. for the Dublin 4-H Center. (ca. 1953)

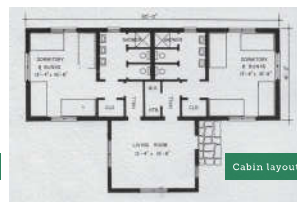
2. Shown above looking at blueprints for the center are, left to right, Luther Coleman, Laurens County Negro agent; Augustus Hill, assistant supervisor for Negro Extension work; M.C. Smith, chairman of the committee; Mrs. R.W. Harvey, Laurens County home demonstration agent; and A.F. Cummings, Laurens County farmer. (ca. 1957)

3. State 4-H Leader Tommy Walton, left; Luther Coleman, second from left; and Extension Director Bill Sutton, right, watch as Mrs. Mills Bee Lane presented the key to the first cabin constructed at Dublin 4-H Center to a state 4-H officer. (ca. 1959)

In 1956, Governor Griffin pledged an additional \$200,000 to finance construction of an auditorium and dining hall. Sewer and water lines were provided by the city of Dublin.



Center layout.



Cabin layout.



Cabin exterior rendering.

The auditorium was dedicated to Emery Carter Thomas, Laurens County Extension Agent and first black alderman (1978-1978) to serve on Dublin's City Council. Thomas graduated from Tuskegee University in Alabama in 1933. He was well known and respected in the agricultural community. He founded a local 4-H Club, organized community farm clubs for men, taught agriculture in Wilkinson, Laurens and Johnson counties, and began a series of livestock and tractor demonstrations. Thomas also hosted a radio program known as "Tom's Ag Show" on WMLT AM. As an alderman, he paid attention to what was needed and did his best to propel any efforts to better the black community.



Morris Smith, chairman of the State Negro 4-H Advisory Committee, left, greeted guests in front of the Mills Bee Lane Cabin in 1955.



Gus Hill, (left), P.H. Stone (center), and F.C. Childers (right) reviewed plans.

A.S. Bacon was appointed state agent for Negro Extension Work in 1956. He established a State Negro 4-H Advisory Committee consisting of twenty-seven outstanding black citizens from across Georgia. Together, they guided the successful completion of the \$750,000 Dublin 4-H Center and the overall 4-H program.

Cooper, Barrett, Skinner, Woodbury & Cooper, Inc., architects of the Rock Eagle 4-H Center, were called upon to design the Dublin 4-H Center. The auditorium and dining hall were of concrete block construction faced with brick. To accommodate multi-purpose functions, folding chairs were used which could easily be removed and rearranged. Extension Agricultural Engineer G.I. Johnson managed clearing the property and overseeing all the projects. Extension Landscape Architect T.G. Williams prepared a master plan, using sidewalks to connect cabins with all the major buildings. Native trees and shrubs melded the new campus into the natural beauty of the property.

The official dedication of the Dublin 4-H Center was held November 15, 1957. Dublin Mayor Felton J. Pierce welcomed more than 250 distinguished guests, in addition to more than 100 outstanding black 4-H Club members who had just completed competitions at the annual State Negro 4-H Club Congress. The Oconee High School band and chorus created an atmosphere befitting a joyous occasion. During dedication ceremonies, Tom Gregory, executive secretary to Governor Marvin Griffin, presented keys to the Dublin 4-H Center to Georgia's Extension Director Bill Sutton. Sutton had used his exemplary leadership skills to propel the Dublin 4-H Center and 4-H Club project work with black youth into the national spotlight. He was later named chairman of a National committee to plan a Negro 4-H Club Camp in Washington, D.C.

State 4-H Leader Tommy Walton announced to State Congress delegates that three new cabins were being dedicated that day, and five more would break ground immediately; 22 additional cabins were planned. Present for the celebration was P.H. Stone, administrative assistant in Federal Extension Office of the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington D.C. He stated that day that [the Center] had far surpassed anything the founders of the camp could have imagined. It was to be the only 4-H Club camp/center of its kind in the United States.

The last building to be erected at Dublin 4-H Center was the E.R. Gay Pavilion. Gay was an Extension agent in Clarke County. He managed the Dublin 4-H Center prior to his service in Clarke County. At the time of his death, he was raising money to build another cabin at Dublin 4-H Center. Family and friends continued the campaign, raising \$4,000 to build a multi-purpose pavilion. They gathered at Dublin 4-H Center in 1967 for the dedication. In 1973, Gay's friend and colleague State 4-H Leader Tommy Walton invited Mrs. E.R. Gay to the Rock Eagle 4-H Center, where a pavilion in Area II was dedicated as the E.R. Gay Pavilion. This pavilion stands as a testament that all 4-H'ers are entitled to the same privileges, "regardless of economic, ethnic, or cultural background or place of residence." The E.R. Gay Pavilion also represents the profound impact the Dublin 4-H Center had on thousands of 4-H Club members during its brief history.

For more information please visit Georgia4h.org/Dublin

Source information: Rock Eagle: Centerpiece of Georgia 4-H by Ina C. Hopkins