

THE KEEPER

GREEN-MELDRIM HOUSE

May 2025

For 2024-2025 Annual Giving Report



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The Keeper is published
in May and December.



The Green-Meldrim House
is a museum property owned
by St. John's Church.

LIGHT UP THE DOME: Part 1

December 4th 1854

**Received from John S. Norris \$60 for a
Dome Sash for C. Green's House in Savannah
Georgia New York Jan 16th 1855**

C. Coles

[C. [Cornelius] Coles, sash maker,
113 Canal Street. New York City Directory.]



Before restoration.

March 2025 GMH Dome with
oculus in place.

As the GMH Dome is a beloved interior highlight,
you may be interested in recent preservation work.

In April the oculus, the round lens-type feature, at
the top of the Green-Meldrim House dome was removed for conservation. This
is the most visible sign that the long-yearned-for work on the iconic architectural
feature is underway. St. John's Preservation Team, led by Sinisa Domazet, is im-
plementing the project.

To accomplish the oculus's removal, the team ascended a ladder and climbed
through a trap door into the attic to execute unseen preparatory tasks. They fash-
ioned a frame of two-by-fours to lift the oculus window out and shifted it down
from the dome structure. The dome, which is completely inside the attic, is com-
prised of a brick base below a wooden skel-
etal-like frame which supports a rounded
plaster and lathing structure. On the oppo-
site side of this structure is the decorative
plaster which – from the interior stairway –
gives the dome its eye-appeal. The oculus
“window” or sash is made of a wooden
frame which holds metal strips that form
the rosette design of glass panes.

Corbin Mines and Sinisa Domazet detached
the metal from the wood frame and re-
moved the glass panes, which at some point
in the past were painted white. Originally
this may have looked clean and bright, but
over time appeared stained and dirty. Sinisa
brought the panes out of the attic and laid
them out on the back porch for assessment.
The big decision for the Keepers of the



Attic view of GMH dome structure with
oculus removed with 2 X 4 supports.

Green-Meldrim House was what type of glass to put into the oculus for the future – clear glass, etched glass, opaque glass. What made the decision easy is that the glass removed, while not original to the house, is old glass, which has a history - over 100 years -- at the house, and it is in good condition. All agreed that the current glass, which has an opaque quality, should be cleaned and put back in the metal structure. Anna Habersham Wright Smith's Historic Structure Report calls the glass "smoked," as it has a light grey tint. Glass conservator Krista Domazet removed the white paint and carefully cleaned the panes with denatured alcohol.

The metal structure, made of galvanized metal, was cleaned and repainted and will once again house the glass panes comprising the oculus's design. On examination of the metal frame, one can see how it was riveted together, which indicates its construction history (i.e. machine made, etc.). We do not know if it was customed work or prefab, nor do we know if the design mimicked or is similar to what was originally there. We do know that it is what the Meldrims had, thanks to the New Deal era photos taken of the house as part of the Historic American Building Survey and are now available via Internet from the Library of Congress.

Sinisa and his crew are strategizing about the placement of support wires to distribute the weight of the oculus evenly throughout the structure as they plan to return the conserved oculus to its original position. In the early summer, the cleaned and repaired oculus will be back in place. Then all will be ready to begin the next phase of conservation, which includes paint analysis, plaster inspection and repair – if needed, and painting. The plan is for the work to take place during the historic house's slowest trafficked time – late August and through September.

It is thrilling to see the work take place. We continue to learn from the house with the end game being the dome resembling what it was like 170 years ago by the end of the year. It is like waiting for Christmas!



Attic view of the dome structure before the oculus was removed



Glass panes of the oculus rosettes laid out for assessment.



Cleaned a painted metal frame which hold the glass panes of the oculus rosette.

Founding Friends of the Green-Meldrim House: 2024-25 Annual Giving Campaign

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Everybody loves Yancey!

Family Pet and Soldier's Friend



In late 1899, the war between Spain and the United States was all but over. Though the Treaty of Paris brought it to an official end in December of that year, it had been winding down since August. While guns of war no longer threatened to tear men apart, accidents and illnesses were just as deadly, if not more so, for the soldiers who still poured into the Philippines and Cuba as occupying forces. Across the United States, loved ones waited anxiously for word from their service member to return from abroad, including the Meldrim family. It was not, however, their son Ralph, or a beau of one of the daughters, who had been traversing foreign shores, rather it was Yancey, the family dog. For nearly three months, Yancey had an unplanned and unapproved adventure overseas, travelling from Savannah to Cuba, twice, before making her way back home.

Prior to her escapades, Yancey was a devoted household pet. The

dog, along with the other family creatures, would amuse the Meldrim children with their animal abilities. In the 1956 article, "*The Yellow House*" from *The Georgia Review*, Jane Meldrim Hewitt recounts what life was like growing up in the house and shares that for fun the family would put on small pet shows with the children's ponies and their talented dog. Belle the Shetland pony was a less than stellar entertainer, but Ralph's Texas steed gave a rousing bareback lasso routine. The dog, though, stole the show. According to Hewitt, "Yancey, the greyhound, was the star performer, and she had quite the jumping act." The dog's impressive tricks were due in part from the coaching of the Meldrim son, but Yancey's other skills were the result of the tutelage of the Meldrim's neighbors, the soldiers of the Seventh Army.

Today if you stand on the porch of the Green-Meldrim House and look out to the corner of Bull and

Harris Street you see the twentieth-century version of the DeSoto Hotel. In 1899 you would have seen the first iteration of the DeSoto being built on the site of former Oglethorpe Barracks. The barracks were decommissioned, but with war on-going, there were still plenty of soldiers swarming the area. The Seventh Army Corps was established in May 1889, following the declaration of war with Spain. Its headquarters began in Tampa, Florida as Camp Springfield but just a month later, it moved to Jacksonville and was renamed Camp Cuba Libre.

According to Patrick McSherry in his article *Camp Cuba Libre* on the website, WWW.SpanAmWar.com, conditions at the camp were crowded and supplies were scarce. Soldiers told stories of how uniforms were worn out, sleeping conditions were primitive and dinner was eaten with bare hands on top of roofing shingles. So, no doubt in late October 1889, when The Seventh Army Corps arrived in Savannah in preparation of shipping out to Cuba, they were desperate for some home cooking, lovely company and some creature comforts, or a comforting creature. This is exactly what they got a few weeks later when the Meldrim daughters joined other ladies of Savannah in providing a patriotic Thanksgiving meal for the whole of the Seventh Army Corps. The normally well-behaved Yancey frequently accompanied the family on trips around the neighborhood, and this holiday was no different. There might have been some lingering hesita-



The 3rd Georgia Volunteer Infantry, Co. D.
They went to Cuba after the war as part of the occupying troops.

tion in the mind of Judge Meldrim and his wife that their daughters may need to be wary of the advances of soldiers; however no one considered that it was the dog that was vulnerable to the attentions of young men.

A February 27, 1899, article in the *Savannah Morning News* newspaper recounts Yancey's abduction, "When the young ladies returned home at night, Yancey was missing. No particular anxiety was felt as it was thought she was separated from the party and that she would make her appearance the next day. A day or two passed but no Yancey." The family began inquiring about Yancey's whereabouts and it was learned that she was last seen in the companionship of soldiers from the Ninth Illinois Company, the same company the girls had served during Thanksgiving dinner.

Eager to return Yancey to the family, Ralph confronted some of the Soldiers of the Ninth Illinois. They confessed that Yancey had "enlisted" with them but that she had since been "transferred" to another command. They then

produced a photo of Yancey, standing on her hind legs, surrounded by a half dozen soldiers. The enlisted men insisted, however, that while they had the photo, they did not have the dog. A frustrated Ralph demanded the photo, which the soldiers complied with and then Ralph returned home. At home, Ralph's father was also working on bringing the purloined pet back. Peter Meldrim was entertaining Maj. John Gary Evans, the Inspector General of the First Division of the Seventh Army Corps. Explaining the situation to him, Evans agreed to keep an eye out for Yancey. Sure enough, after carefully screening soldiers embarking for Cuba on the transport ship *Mobile*, the dog was discovered. She was then taken to the baggage room of the DeSoto hotel while the Meldrim family could be informed of her return. Perhaps the new hotel did not have the sturdiest locks for when Maj. Evans went to fetch the dog, she was gone. It was assumed, correctly, the soldiers had absconded with Yancey a second time, although the troops insisted that Yancey

had joined them on the transport ship of her own volition.

Taking a pet to war to serve as a military animal mascot was not uncommon at this time. Perhaps one of the most notable mascot was Jack

Brutus, a mastiff from Connecticut who supposedly wandered



*Jack Brutus
Armed and Equipped*

the Maine coast before Soldiers of Company K, First Connecticut Volunteers met him at Fort Preble in Portland, Maine, in May of 1898. The soldiers quickly became enamored with Jack and soon he was the company's official mascot. He travelled with the unit as they encamped up and down the Eastern Seaboard providing coastal defense during the Spanish-American War. After the war, Jack Brutus retired from military service to a farmhouse in Connecticut. He never traveled overseas. The same could not be said for Yancey.

Her flirtation with Army life must have struck Yancey with a keen sense of patriotism, for a few weeks after being rescued from *the Mobile*, a second time, the dog was missing. On January 12, 1899, Yancey accompanied Mrs. Meldtm and the Misses Meldrims to see the Third Georgia Regiment off to Havana, aboard the transport ship *Roumanian*. Ac-



This is a stereo card showing the stern view of the *ROUMANIAN* be loaded with supplies for her journey to Cuba.

cording to an article in *The Morning News* on February 27, 1899, Yancey was seen trotting behind the carriage to the port but did not make her way back to her home on Madison Square. There was no sign of Yancey for nearly a week, and the family had resigned themselves to the idea that their beloved dog was gone for good. Undoubtedly, they were surprised and delighted when a letter arrived from Capt. Charles M. Wrigley, the quartermaster of the *Roumanian*. He wrote that the former cattle-carrying ship had arrived safely in Havana with 1,100 men, 45 officers, 50 horses, and one dog. Yancey was in Cuba.

Once the concealed canine was discovered, the soldiers tried to convince their leaders to let them keep their new recruit, saying that the dog came with them of her own will, but some of the officers recalled the story of Yancey's near-abscondment at Thanksgiving with the 9th Illinois and recognized her from visiting the Meldrim house and knew the dog was missed. They decided the dog must return to her rightful family. Jane Meldrim Hewitt recounted in '*The Old Yellow House*', "That they wanted to keep her because they said they [the soldiers] loved her so, but Papa said we loved her too, and Papa was the Mayor." Plans were made to return the dog on the *Roumanian*'s next voyage back to Savannah. The family was happy that soon the dog would be back with them. However, that was not to be as the *Roumanian* was ordered not to Savannah but to New York City. Once in New York, Wrigley sent a letter to the Meldrim's informing them that Yancey had arrived back in the country, and he had entrusted her return to Georgia with one of the master carpenters who was headed to Savannah via steamship. The family eagerly awaited the return of the dog, but steamships from New York came and went with no pooch on board. It was determined that Yancey had given the carpenter the slip.

Nothing was heard from Yancey for weeks until an unusual letter arrived from New York, addressed to the Mayor of Savannah. The letter, from a Mr. Carter, stated that he was in possession of a fine, large Greyhound that a city official in Savannah may be acquainted with. He went on to relay that the dog had attached herself to his family, while they were at the Brooklyn docks seeing a friend off on a transport to Cuba. They wanted to keep the dog, and the soldiers on the ship seemed willing to part with her. As the Carter family was leaving with their new dog, one of the recruits called out from the ship, "That's a great dog! She belongs to a city official in Savannah and has made two trips to Cuba." Knowing the value and love of a good dog, Mr. Carter wanted to reunite Yancey with her family. A few weeks later Ralph was on hand to greet the steamship *City of Augusta* and welcome their prodigal pet home with much joy and a leash.

Jennifer McCarthy, Assistant Director



SVF performers in the GMH at the popular holiday program .

COLLABORATIONS BENEFITS FRIENDS OF THE GREEN-MELDRIM HOUSE!

Savannah VOICE Festival and Savannah Chapter/Victorian Society in America

The GMH's primary function is to be open for excellent daily tours five days a week when the world comes to its doors. Our guest book shows visitors from across the globe and throughout the United States, who seek out the historic house and its story, with recent international visitors from Australia, Canada, Ecuador, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Brazil, Chile and Taiwan. In addition to the service tour patrons receive, the house provides ways to enlighten and enrich the cultural lives of Savannahians as well. It does this through lectures, programs and special focus tours that expand the story beyond the guided tour. It offers in-house programs such as its PARLOR PRESENTATIONS series where the GMH brings in a speaker or a program that is linked closely to the interpretation of the house, i.e. Anna Habersham Wrights Smith's program on the GMH roof work and Mark McDonald's lecture of Georgia architecture.

The GHM also partners with two particular cultural entities which broadens

the reach from what it can do alone. The GMH/ St. John's Church has been a supporter of the **Savannah VOICE Festival** for over a decade, with the house being the location of its exclusive event during its August series. The SVF is a classical music, opera and art song festival in Savannah, which was founded in 2013 by opera singers Sherrill Milnes and Maria Zouves. The festival of concerts, workshops and events occurs primarily in August, but with special programming throughout the year. With the advent of the Keepers of Historic Green-Meldrim House, the relationship changed. While continuing to host the salon event, the GMH and the SVF have crafted a relationship pairing beautiful music provided by SVF's trained voices and a spectacular house (GMH with its Steinway piano) all related to a theme of mutual agreement. The 2024-2025 season was dubbed the "passport" collaboration of three events with music from places the Green or Meldrims might have known. Dates are on the calendar for the 2025-2026 season and we are now curating the music and themes. Please be aware the SVF will provide sweet-sounding voices for the August 3rd drop-in **CELEBRATION SUNDAY** for the Friends of Green-Meldrim House thank you event. See the announcement elsewhere in the newsletter. At the Celebration, the 2025-2026 season will be unveiled, and GMH Friends will have the early bird's chance to register for the popular series.

The **Savannah Chapter of the Victorian Society in America** is GMH's other programmatic partner. The Savannah Chapter is one of nine chapters under the umbrella of the national organization.



Tru Helms' October 2024 lecture on the windows at St. John's Church was a SVA presentation.

Its job is to "To foster appreciation and understanding of 19th-century America and encouraging the protection and preservation of all things Victorian." The Savannah's chapter is the sec-



In April 2025 Ahmari Williams-Alford of the Telfair Museums discussed Savannah silver.

ond largest, behind the New York Metro Chapter, in terms of membership with over 100 people on rolls. In 2024-2025, the house hosted six lectures providing the venue and meeting space for the organization, whose imperative is closely linked to the GMH. Chapter President Danielle Oke notes that for many the term "Victorian" conjures up stogie connotations of prudery and over-stuffed furniture. She says, "Forget all that. It is about all things 19th century – architecture, social history, decorative arts, cultural history. We try to provide a variety of programs and speakers, not just academics. Last year we offered enthusiasts, preservationists, leaders in their fields as well as up-and-comers." Speakers in the new year, beginning in September 2025 include Emi Higashiyama, who will speak on the language of flowers and Davod Weiser of AmiciMusic – Music Among Friends, who will provide a program of 19th century music and commentary. Many of the VSA programs are related directly to the GMH's interpretation and they all fit with it "time period." Attending VSA programs at the GMH is one of the benefits of being a GMH Friend.

The collaborations with **Savannah VOICE Festival** and the **Savannah Chapter of the Victorian Society** wed content with hospitality and social interactions. With each event there are refreshments, as well as opportunities for social interaction with the speakers, performers, the members of the entities and the general public. "Our partnerships strengthen our community of volunteers, and supporters, providing occasions for intellectual growth, thoughtfulness, delight and connection," says Jamie Credle, Executive Director, Green-Meldrim House.

GMH HAPPENINGS AND MILESTONES

Upcoming at the GREEN-MELDRIM HOUSE

Summer Youth Guide Program
Begins June 19

Docent Training Program –
Mondays in July

Summer College Intern Program

GMH Friends SUNDAY CELEBRATION with music from the Savannah VOICE Festival –
August 3rd from 1 to 3 p.m.

Savannah VOICE Festival event –
Wednesday, August 13 –
Tickets through SVF website

**Summer Internship Student
Project Review and Volunteer
Salad Luncheon –**
Friday, August 15 at 11 a.m.

PARLOR PRESENTATION – Speaker
Jamie Credle. Topic: **The Historic House of Ireland** —
Thursday, September 25 at 6 p.m.

Savannah Chapter/Victorian Society in America, Inc. –
Dates to be Announced

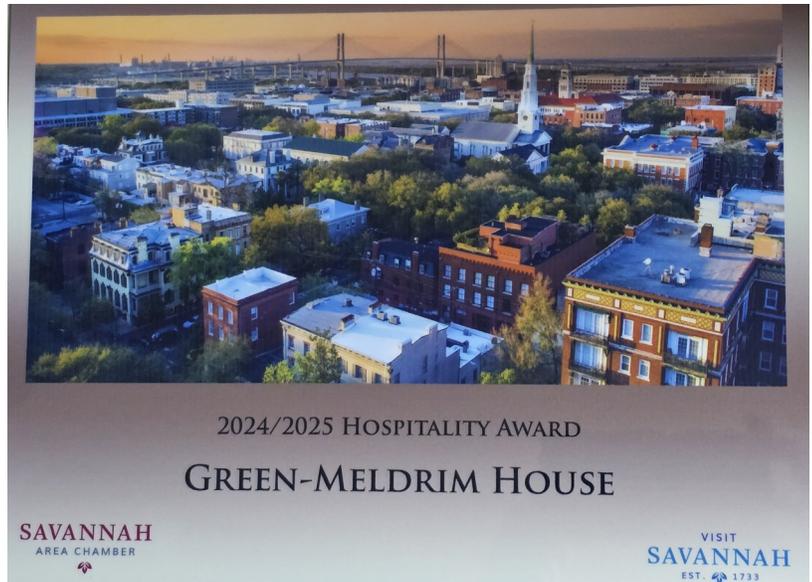
**Savannah VOICE Festival/GMH
Collaboration –**
Dates to be Announced

Living History in October

**Savannah Arts Academy Youth
Guide Program**

GMH Holiday Party

Living History in December



In March 2025, the Green-Meldrim House was recognized by the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce/Visit Savannah as the **HOSPITALITY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR**.



In May a production company with *Emancipation and Exodus Film Project*, an initiative associated with Ken Burns and the Public Broadcast System, filmed two interviews and exterior shots of the house for a series slated to air in 2027.

Garden Club of Savannah's **NOG** ("North of Gaston") **Hidden Gardens** event in April was beautiful and based at the GMH.



Green-Meldrim House Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. until 3:30 with the last tour beginning at 3:30 p.m. Tour will begin and end every hour and half hour. Sophie's Shop, the GMH Gift Shop, is open during tour hours.

WE APPRECIATE YOU!

...and hope you will join us for a

**CELEBRATION
SUNDAY**

A THANK YOU event for the supporters
and Friends of the Green-Meldrum House
and Savannah VOICE Festival.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 3, 2025

Drop in anytime between 1 & 3pm

An Open House Event

Green-Meldrum House

327 Bull St, Savannah-Madison Square

Light bites, cordials and joyful music

provided by SVF's Season 13 artists.

SAVANNAH
VOICE
FESTIVAL

Aug 7-17, 2025



RSVP by July 31 info@GreenMeldrumHouse.org

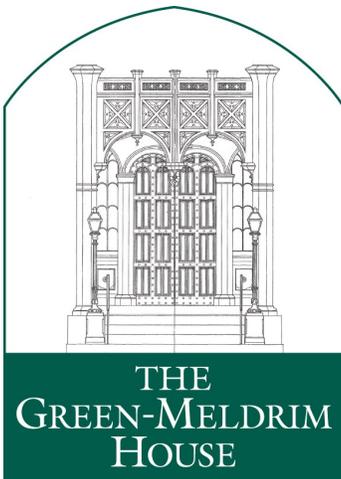
We will also be announcing our 25-26
Salon Series dates!



Green-Meldrim House

P.O. Box 11061

Savannah, GA 31412



P.O. Box 11061

Savannah, GA 31412

912.233.3845

www.GreenMeldrimHouse.org

Donation Form

- \$60 — Individual
 - \$100 — Family
 - \$250 — Sustaining
 - \$500 — Steward
 - \$1,000 — Norris Society
 - \$2,500 — Pressly Society
 - \$5,000 — Green & Meldrim Society
 - \$10,000 — 1850 Society
- Other: \$ _____

Gifts solely support the Green-Meldrim House and are fully tax-deductible.

Donations accepted online.

Donations include free admission and invitations to programs.

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Remember **Sophie's Shop** for your summer gift giving! On the second floor of the Green-Meldrim House you will find books related to the house and Savannah, fine soaps, gifts and children's items. The **Sophie's Shop** is open four hours—Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.