



Gwinnett County Government

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NEWS RELEASE

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GWINNETT COUNTY CELEBRATES ACQUISITION OF HISTORIC GRISTMILL

(Lawrenceville, October 16, 2001) – A superb example of a typical rural gristmill found along rivers throughout Georgia in the mid-19th century will be preserved now that Gwinnett County government has purchased the historic Alcovy River Gristmill, also known as Swann’s Mill or Freeman’s Mill. Gwinnett County held a ceremony on Tuesday, October 16, 2001, at 3 p.m. on the site of the Alcovy River Gristmill to officially announce this important greenspace acquisition. The event provided an opportunity to learn more about the history of the gristmill and to photograph the beautiful historic site.

Gwinnett County closed on the property for the sum of \$350,000. The acquisition was made with dollars granted by the Georgia Greenspace Program and is Gwinnett County’s first greenspace purchase using funds from the state’s program. The county worked with the mill’s longtime owners, Dr. and Mrs. Julian Swann, to purchase the land and ensure the preservation of the mill and the surrounding property.

“On behalf of my family, I’m pleased that Gwinnett County has acquired the property known as Swann’s Mill (a.k.a. Freeman’s Mill) for historical preservation as a county park,” said Dr. Julian Swann.

The Alcovy River Gristmill was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 for its significance in architecture, engineering, industry, and social history. Gwinnett County Commission Chairman F. Wayne Hill explained, “The Alcovy River Gristmill is a significant piece of Gwinnett County’s history. We have an obligation to set aside land for greenspace in this county and I feel honored that, in this instance, we can also preserve an important historical site for future generations.”

The Board of Commissioners has strongly supported the county’s leadership in greenspace -

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acquisition, viewing the preservation of such lands as essential to the quality of life in Gwinnett.

Since 1998, Gwinnett County has acquired more than 2,700 acres of park land. Eighty percent of these land purchases were targeted for passive recreational use, such as the purchase of the Alcovy River Gristmill. Gwinnett County has purchased greenspace using funds from the General Fund, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) and, now, the Georgia Greenspace Program.

Acquisition of the Alcovy River Gristmill, which includes 12 acres bordering the Alcovy River in eastern Gwinnett County, meets several goals specified by the Georgia Greenspace Act. These objectives include protecting or enhancing water quality, providing natural habitat and corridors for native plant and animal species, protecting archaeological and historic resources, and providing passive recreation. The Georgia Greenspace Program granted Gwinnett County more than \$3.3 million in the first year of the program with participating cities sharing in this grant amount.

Ownership of the mill has changed several times throughout its history. The first owners, and original builders of the mill, were the Loveless brothers, followed by the Freeman family, a father and son. Newt Pharr bought the mill in 1915 and Lewis Swann purchased it in 1946. The Swann family has maintained the mill up to the present day.

“The mill has been in and out of both sides of my family since the War Between the States, said Dr. Swann. “It is my hope that the citizens of the county will enjoy this picturesque historic site for generations to come.”

The Alcovy River Gristmill was originally constructed between 1868 and 1879. Farmers would bring their corn to the mill to be ground into corn meal, leaving a portion for the miller to sell himself. The 1880 manufacturing census shows the Alcovy River Gristmill ran ten hours a day year round, and produced 40 barrels of wheat flour, 14,400 pounds of corn meal and 54,000 pounds of feed annually. The mill remained in operation until 1986.

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