

BILLUPS PHINIZY SPALDING

Billups Phinizy Spalding, professor of history at the University of Georgia, distinguished historian of his native state, and a member of the American Antiquarian Society since 1990, died March 8, 1994.

Phinizy Spalding, for me, is always there sitting at a table in the corner of the Blue Bird Cafe in Athens. He had breakfast most mornings quietly holding court with old friends. Members of the crew of the spartan vegetarian restaurant, shopkeepers, retired professors, housewrights—aristocrats all—sat 'round him quietly deploring the latest new architectural folly, the newest egregious bulldozing. Never giving up, they were also earnestly planning the preservation of the old residential and downtown streets of this old Georgia city which Phinizy, almost single-handedly at first, had rescued from the myriad of urban blights that, on every corner, sat ready to pounce.

Spalding's passion for rescuing old houses—he lived in one of the most charming of these—went hand in hand with his scholarly passion for the history of his Georgia. His most distinguished work is his biography *Oglethorpe in America*, but he has written much more of the history of eighteenth-century Georgia, a story that he told with personal intensity. It was a Georgia of origins that he chose to chronicle; he seems almost instinctively to have shied away from the troubles of nineteenth-century antebellum Georgia which so many of our predecessors had tried to disguise.

If a good many people view beautiful old houses as icons of an unblemished beautiful old past, Phinizy Spalding was not one of them. He knew what slavery and racism had done to his South, and he moved graciously and gratefully into a changed Georgia of the present. His loyalty to place was matched by his loyalty to his alma mater, the University of Georgia, where he studied history as an undergraduate. He received his doctorate in history from the University of North Carolina in 1963 and taught at the College of Charleston before returning to the University of Georgia,

where he taught for twenty-nine years. Over those years, he drew increasingly large numbers of loyal students to his courses in the history of the old South.

Spalding's curiosity about that South never faltered; one of his last scholarly works was not on paper but an interview on the anthropologist David Hurst Thomas's film depicting the excavation of the remains of the Guale Indians interred under the Spanish mission church on the Georgia coastal island of St. Catherines. With almost stern insistence, Professor Spalding, lecturing to us, was changing his own picture of early Georgia. There had been intensely interesting people interacting with Europeans on our coast long before the English came. It was our responsibility, he seemed to be saying, to know this story just as clearly as we knew our more familiar story.

Much as Phinizy never ceased to grow as a historian, he refused to allow himself to be diminished as a human being. He faced cancer with remarkable courage and astonishing candor. It was not simply that he pursued every treatment and braced against every assault; it was that he made the years of dying years of intense living. His interests increased, his travels—with his lovely wife Margie—were extended, and his reach to people grew. I will not soon forget the turn of his handsome white-haired head and the warmth and humor of his smile across the tables of the Blue Bird Cafe.

William S. McFeely

JEREMIAH KAPLAN

Jeremiah Kaplan, one of the leading figures of the American publishing world in the twentieth century, was born in New York City on July 15, 1926, the son of Samuel H. and Fannie (Brafman) Kaplan. As a teenager, he was active in the Young Peoples Socialist

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.