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Museum seeks to end Choctaw Academy pact

By James Scogin
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Georgetown/Scott County Museum is seeking to end a preservation easement with Choctaw Academy that has been in effect for eight years, citing liabilities and limited funding.

The Choctaw Academy, situated on 77.55 acres in Stamping Ground, is being considered for a National Historic Landmark (NHL), according to documentation from the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) provided to Chip Richardson, who bought the Academy property in 2012, and Sean Jacobson, assistant professor in the department of history at University of North Alabama.

Georgetown/Scott County Museum has recently sought legal representation from John M. Sosbe to leave a preserva-



‘Taxpayers invested in a local institution dedicated to preserving our history. I’m simply asking that institution to help preserve one of the most important pieces in history entrusted to it.’

Chip Richardson
Choctaw Academy property owner

tion easement agreed upon by the museum and Richardson in 2018.

“The timing is difficult to comprehend,” Richardson said of receiving letters from Sosbe dated June 22 and Sept. 1 of this year. “The National Park Service has invited us to pursue National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation for the Choctaw Academy—recognition reserved for places of exceptional importance to the history of the United States.”

In a letter written to Jacobson, a professional

consultant on the Choctaw Academy project, DOI notes Choctaw Academy is a “good candidate for nomination under NHL Criterion 1 as an early example of a federal Indian boarding school” in a preliminary evaluation for a NHL.

“Because of the historic education function as a federal Indian boarding school, Tribal perspectives and discussion of student experiences will be essential to center in the NHL nomination,” the DOI letter states.

“To be eligible for designation under NHL Criterion 1, a property must be ‘associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States historians from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained,’”

A property must also “retain a high degree of historic integrity” to be considered, reads the DOI

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Brief history of Choctaw Academy

By James Scogin
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Choctaw Academy opened in 1825 as Richard M. Johnson, then-soon-to-be Vice President of the United States, was “anxious to take positive steps to help the Indian become assimilated into the emerging American culture,” according to local historian Ann Bevins’ book “A History of Scott County As Told By Selected Buildings.”

“January 26, 1825, the Choctaw nation and the United States government entered a treaty providing (\$6,000) a year for (20) years for the education of Choctaw children ‘at some point distant from the nation,’” Bevins writes in her book.

By fall of 1825, 21 Choctaw arrived at Blue Spring Farm, owned by Johnson, to “learn the basic educational necessities,” she writes. “Some were there to be prepared for higher education.”

Choctaw Academy once consisted of five buildings, Bevins writes, but now the dormitory is what stands today in Stamping Ground.

“The Academy itself was a two-story stone house (44x24) feet,” according to Bevins’ book. “The three other stone buildings were used for dining and lodging. There was one frame structure.”

Ten white boys from surrounding farms attended the

See **HISTORY**, 14A



Miniature horse Big Mike, who was recently donated to Old Friends Equine and spent years at the Kentucky Horse Park, sits on a cushion, one of around 40 tricks that he can perform on command. Ashton Grove memory care residents, EmpowerMe staff, and others look on.

Seniors meet steeds at Ashton Grove

A dozen Ashton Grove residents in the senior living center’s memory care program fed retired thoroughbred racehorses and watched miniature horse Big Mike perform a few of his tricks on Wednesday, Sept. 16. Memory care residents, escorted by EmpowerMe cognitive therapy employees, visit with the horses at Ashton Grove once a month as part of a partnership with Old Friends Equine thoroughbred retirement farm.



Ashton Grove residents, assisted by EmpowerMe staff, fed carrots to some of the retired thoroughbred racehorses outside the senior care facility as part of a joint program with Old Friends Equine.

GEORGETOWN CITY COUNCIL

Council rejects property tax increase

By Jack Thomas
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Georgetown City Council unanimously rejected a proposed tax levy on real and personal property at its meeting Monday, Sept. 14, which would have increased rates from 2025. Instead, Councilmembers moved forward with a compensating rate tax levy that would lower the property tax rate from last year. A special-called meeting is scheduled for Monday, Sept. 21, at 6 p.m. in City Hall’s council chambers for a second reading and discussion of the reduced property tax levy.

Following a second reading of the originally proposed tax rates—which included rates of 6.3 cents per \$100 assessed on both real and personal property, up

from 6.2 cents per \$100 in 2025—members of Council expressed concerns about affordability. Councilmember Karen Tingle Sames suggested keeping the 2025 rate or reducing it, alluding to Scott County Fiscal Court’s recent decision to reduce property taxes for 2026 and Scott County Board of Education’s increased tax levy.

“The school board just blasted everybody with a tax,” Tingle Sames said. “I tell people

all the time: the city tax is not that much when it comes to your property tax, nor is the county; it’s the school board that’s killing everybody in our community with the taxes.

“... Here we sat in this room and had a big discussion—three different meetings, or four—about

See **COUNCIL**, 14A

Ongoing:
Garth Memories Exhibit
GSC Museum



Area deaths

Leanna Jo Covington, 79
Elizabeth Masters Hester, 97

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